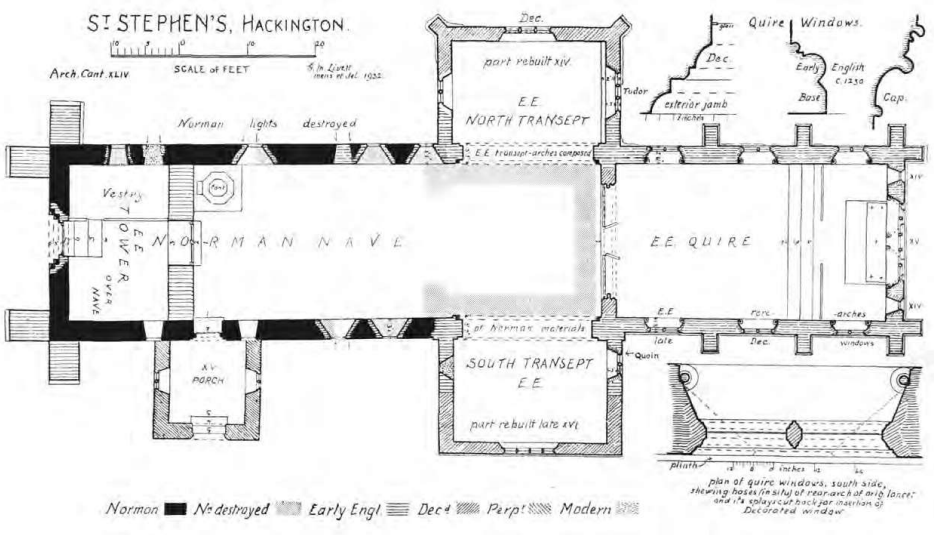
St Stephen's Church – its architecture.

This guide is based on "The Church of St Stephen Proto-martyr, Hackington – A History and Guide" (1956) by John Hayes, revised with additional material from sources not available to that author.

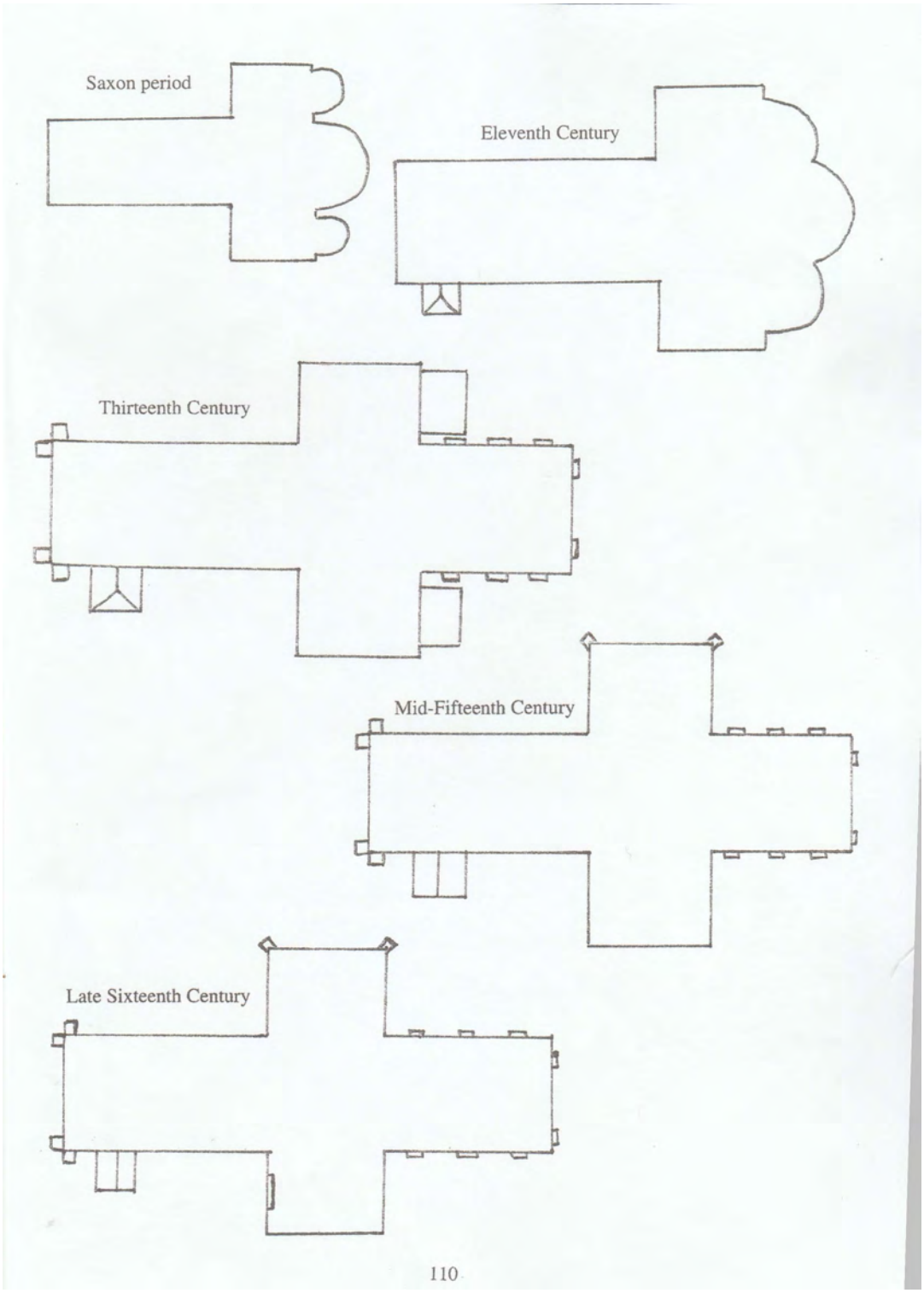
The Church Building – exterior

It is not clear how the church building has reached its present appearance Just inside the south door on the right is a plan from a survey in 1932 9 (copy from the original publication below). One of those involved (Canon GM Livett, 1859-1951) was one of the greatest authorities on Kent churches. This includes dates for various features of the church and suggests that the building was originally rectangular and the transepts and chancel added later.



However based on the

appearance of the outside walls and more recent archaeological excavations other authorities have argued that the building had the present cross-shaped plan from the start, or was T shaped with transepts rounded at the east end (apsidal) The Figure below shows one hypothesis on how the floor plan might have developed.



However it developed, the building was altered four or five times between its original construction and the late 16th century and the shape of both chancel and transepts may have been modified.

The massive tower at the west end of the church is the most striking feature as one approaches from the main gate into the churchyard. The lower part of its walls and those of much of the nave are thought to have been part of St Anselm's church built around 1100 – they are made of flint and reused Roman brick set 'herringbone-wise' in thick layers of coarse lime mortar, a style typical of that period. This pattern is particularly obvious on the north side. Here too one can see traces of the plaster which would have originally covered the outside of the church, concealing the random mixture of materials used in its construction.

The tower was created in the late 12th or early 13th by building a wall north-south across the west end of the nave. Large angle buttresses were added on the north-west and south-west corners (containing much reused masonry) to support the tower which was built with large Hythe stone quoins (and some reused Caen stone blocks). The rectangular window half way up the wall dates from this period but the upper windows were replaced in the 15th century and the clock (which has an hour hand but no minute hand) installed in 1730.

The chancel was rebuilt at around the same time as the tower was created. The south porch was built in the 14th or 15th century, although this may have replaced an earlier porch. The transepts were partially rebuilt in late 16th century and brick from this period can be seen.

Before going inside it is worth looking at the west doorway, with its zigzag decoration. This is 12th century, so could be part of Anselm's original building, but it has been modified at some later time to produce a pointed arch rather than the original round arch used at that time.

Low down on the south-west corner of the tower there is an ordinance survey bench mark which indicates that this point is 14.771 m above sea level. Before the advent of GPS these marks were placed on buildings likely to remain but have now been replaced by more modern technology.

Here as all around the church other than at the entrances there is a ditch. This reflects the rise in the level of the land around the church since it was built; the floor of the nave is about 5 feet lower than the current ground level.

The churchyard is now closed for burials, but there is a small area where the ashes of parishioners who have died recently are buried, and a seat nearby for those who

wish to visit their graves. Of particular note are the four graves from World War II; these are shown on the churchyard map.

The main entrance to the church is now through the south door. Over the porch there is a statue of St Stephen. The niche appears to have been built with the porch to accommodate a statue but the present statue only dates from 1965.

		
South Porch - exterior showing statue of St Stephen	early 12th century south door now inside porch	graffiti crosses on east doorpost of south door.

Inside the porch is the original south door, considered to be the finest architectural feature remaining from Anselm's time. It is made of Caen stone and has a timber lintel. The arch above the door (tympanum) has what is known as a 'chip-carved diaper' pattern in the stone and the side shafts have cushion capitals. In the shaft on the east (right-hand) side there are several small roughly carved graffiti crosses. Often referred to as pilgrim crosses it is not certain whether they were made by pilgrims or were records of other devotion or even of transactions or agreements (marriages for example were traditionally solemnised at the church door).

Also inside the porch is the oldest stained glass in the church; broken fragments (some of which appear to be from heraldic windows) arranged in a random pattern. In the 1640's Puritans smashed many stained glass

windows which they considered idolatrous; the shards were often collected and reused in this way.

A matchstick model of the church by a parishioner and former churchwarden can also be seen in the porch.

Interior – overview.

As you enter the church the tower is on the left, separated from the nave by a thick supporting wall. Entrance to the tower is through a pointed 13th century arch, with doors of a Jacobean style bearing the date 1630 - although the rough way they are fitted suggests they were moved there from somewhere else. On the wood above the doors are the words “Let everything be done decently and in order” – a quotation from St Paul the Apostle (I Corinthians 14 40). It seems likely that this inscription is a Victorian addition.

The tower contains a set of 8 bells; six were cast in 1746 and two more added in 1845. They were rehung and tuned in 1971 and a ringing chamber created on the first floor of the tower to allow the ground floor to be used as a choir vestry. The English tradition of change ringing is well established here - plaques in the tower (not usually open to visitors) record several of the occasions when the bells have been rung in over 5000 of the 6720 possible different sequences. A team of ringers still practises every Monday and rings before Sunday services, for weddings and other special occasions and usually do well in ringing competitions.

The main body of the church (the nave) is now carpeted and filled with pews dating from the 1880’s when they replaced the “box pews” put in at the Reformation (before that most of the congregation would stand as they still do in many Orthodox churches, and the nave would have been empty except perhaps for a few benches for the old and weak, who would “go to the wall” to sit down.)

The window frames show some of the changes which have been made to the church over the centuries. That above the south door has a round Norman arch, and is probably part of the original 12th century church; the pointed arches of the other windows in the nave and chancel date from the 13th century, although the stone tracery which holds the glass in the chancel windows is probably late 14th century. Those in the transepts date from later renovations. The shafts each side of the chancel windows look like Purbeck marble, commonly used for decoration at this time, but in fact are white stone just painted black. The main east window itself is 15th century, but the small windows either side of it are thought to be early 14th century. The stained glass (discussed below) all dates from the 19th and early 20th centuries except for that in the south transept which is 16th Century.

The arches into the north and south transepts are semi-circular (though slightly flattened) and unusually wide for a building of this size. They are slightly flattened, suggesting they have been stretched to provide an opening slightly wider than that for which they were designed. Some suggest that they were originally intended to be part of Archbishop Baldwin's abandoned college recycled during the 13th century rebuilding, but others think they are early to mid-12th century arches (possibly even part of Baldwin's project).

The Font is at the north-west corner of the nave, following the tradition that because people become members of the Church through baptism the font used to baptise them is just inside the door. It is probably 14th century, but was given to the church by Sir Roger Manwood in 1591. Legend has it that it was "found in a ditch". Whether this means it had been thrown out by another church as part of the Protestant destruction of religious artefacts in the mid-16th century, or whether this is the Elizabethan equivalent of "it fell off the back of a lorry" is not clear. It is large enough for a baby to be immersed in it ("discretely and warily" as the Book of Common Prayer advises) though now it is only used to hold water to sprinkle baptismal candidates. The conical font cover is 20th century. Near the font is a large candlestick which (except in Lent) holds the Paschal candle This large candle bearing the date of the current year is a symbol of the Light of the Risen Christ and is kept next to the Font and lit for baptisms as a symbol of Christian rebirth through the resurrection of Christ, except during Eastertide when the Resurrection is particularly celebrated when it stands in the centre of the church and is lit at all services.

Poor Box

A small iron chest with a slot on a pillar bears the words "remember the poor" and the date of 1634. It has the three locks often seen on ancient chests - the need for three key holders to be present to open it was intended to prevent misappropriation of funds, or accusations of misappropriation.

Pulpit

The main body is early 17th century.It is thought that it was originally part of a "three decker" pulpit with a desk for the clerk and a place to read the services below the pulpit we now see. It was converted to a single pulpit in 19th century, and was restored onto a new base in 2020.

Sanctuary

The Altar dates from 1926. Its coloured panels are changed according to the season:

- White for celebration – at Christmas, Easter and other great festivals and Saints Days
- Red for Blood and the Holy Spirit – at Passiontide, Feasts of Martyrs and Pentecost
- Purple for penitence – in Advent and Lent
- Green for growth at other times.

In 1604 Churches were ordered to display the Ten Commandments on the east wall and these can still be seen here. Initially these were usually on wooden boards; the present stone tablets probably date from the Victorian restoration.

Stained Glass and other works of Art

The most western window in the nave on the north side depict St Francis of Assisi preaching to the bird. This is highly appropriate as Lady Loretta, a contemporary of St Francis, was instrumental in bringing the Franciscans to England. The other two windows show St Peter the Apostle (identified by his keys) and St John the Apostle holding a book.

On the south side we have St John and the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple (as told in St Luke's Gospel Chapter 2).

The wall hanging which was made by a group of parishioners in the 1990's and depicts the life of the church since its foundation. A procession of worshippers are entering and leaving the church, their costumes, both everyday and religious reflecting changing fashions and religious practices. Around the edge are coats of arms of people associated with the church, from Baldwin in 1185 to the arms William Hornsby bore as Mayor of Canterbury in 1995.

On the north side of the chancel the window depicts the Trial and Death by Stoning of St Stephen,(as told in Acts of the Apostles Chapters 7 and 8). St Stephen was one of the first deacons (a minister whose special responsibility is the service of the poor and those in need); the first Christian martyr and is the patron saint of the church He is also seen in a small window on the south side of the east wall, dressed as a deacon. The matching north window depicts St Peter, identified by the keys he carries (Matthew 16).

The main east window shows Jesus as the Lamb of God flanked by the four evangelists (Matthew Mark, Luke and John). Below each of them are their traditional symbols (Man, Eagle, Lion, Ox).

The North Transept

This is currently used largely as a storage area, but the windows and the glass they contain are worth a closer look.

The east window of the north transept (now surrounded by the organ pipes) has a typically Tudor rectangular shape (best seen from outside the church as inside is partially obscured by the organ). The north window is in the earlier “Decorated” style, popular between the mid-13th and mid-14th centuries, whilst that in the west wall is earlier and similar in style to the 13th century windows in the nave and chancel.

The glass in the window to the east shows Jesus blessing children (Matthew 19:14), St George (Patron saint of England) and St John. The north window shows the birth, death and resurrection of Jesus, whilst the west window depicts the landing of St Augustine in Kent in 597 AD, and Ethelbert, then King of Kent who welcomed him. The story told in Bede's Ecclesiastical History,(bk.1, ch. 25) of the inspiration for Augustine’s mission when Pope Gregory met some English slaves in Rome and said they were “'*non Angli sed Angeli*'; – not Angles but angels” is also depicted.

The organ was installed in 1903, originally in the south transept. It has been rebuilt twice, in 1963 when it was moved to its present position and again in 2013.

South Transept

The screen which separates the chapel from the main body of the church dates from 1519. It originally stood at the entrance to the chancel (a drawing of the church with it in its original position, and the old box pews, hangs just inside the south door) . It was moved to its present position in 1966. Unusually the contract for its manufacture (indenture) survives, so we know it is the work of a Michael Bonversall A transcript of the document can be found on the website. Originally it would have been surmounted by figures (usually the Virgin Mary, St John and Jesus on the Cross) but these would have been destroyed at the Reformation. The top of the screen was remodelled in the 19th century

This part of the church is known as the Lady Chapel. It is usual for the main side chapel in a church to be dedicated to Mary the Mother of God. It contains a statue of Mary the Mother of Jesus (often referred to as Our Lady) holding the baby Jesus, and a window which depicts the meeting of Mary with her cousin Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist. The banner of the Mother’s Union, an organisation to support mothers under the patronage of Mary is also kept here.

This part of the church is also often called the Manwood Chapel because of the monument to Sir Roger Manwood which dominates it. This remarkable monument to Sir Roger Manwood who died in 1592 was erected shortly after his death and was the work of a Huguenot artist Maximillian Coult who also carved the monument to Queen Elizabeth I in Westminster Abbey.

The bust of Sir Roger is shown wearing an “esses” collar, a mark of distinction in the royal service. Below the bust are the marble figures of his first wife Dorothy and her five children and his second wife Elizabeth.

Below is a wooden skeleton, a reminder of human mortality and the transience of earthly power. (It may also be a pun on his name – a Man (made of) wood). The Latin inscription describes his career.

Originally the “achievements” of Sir Roger Manwood (his helmet, crest, spurs and gauntlets) were hung over this monument, but they were removed to a local museum for safekeeping some years ago. Sadly changes in museum arrangements mean that they are no longer on display, but photographs of them can be seen below.

Spurs

Gaunlet

Crest

Helm

The window opposite the monument contains 16th century Dutch painted glass depicting the arms of the Manwood family. Sir Roger and his family are buried in a vault beneath this chapel.

The chapel is used for daily prayers and small weekday services, and the Blessed Sacrament and holy oils are kept in a small cupboard (aumbry) in the wall. A light always burns before it as a reminder of God's presence with us. This part of the church is kept as a quiet place for prayer and contemplation. Candles can be lit here and prayers for specific people or causes added to the prayer tree.

Heraldry

There are several things of heraldic interest in the church. These are described using a technical heraldic language which is a mixture of English French and Latin dating from the middle ages. Because coats of arms are inherited it is not always clear which member of a family a coat of arms relates to. When however people bearing arms marry their arms are often impaled (divided in two with the husband's arms on the left side (confusingly this is called dexter, from the Latin for right, because the arms are described from the point of view of a person holding a shield bearing them). This can sometimes help clarify the matter. Those who inherit more than one set of arms may be entitled to display both by "quartering" them – dividing the shield into 4 or more sections according to a set of complicated rules.

The coat of arms of Sir Roger Manwood are seen on the Manwood memorial above the tomb in the centre . To the sides are shields with the coat of arms of Sir Roger Manwood on the left (dexter) of the shields and those of his wives "impaled" on the right (sinister) of the relevant shields. These arms are also seen in the glass of the east window of the south transept opposite the tomb. The Manwood arms can also be seen on the monument to Lady Lavinia, wife of Sir Roger Manwood's grandson, impaled with her arms. Several of the other monuments also include the arms of those commemorated; those on the grave slabs of Simon Hayes and John Derew in the chancel are particularly attractive.

The Royal Coat of Arms

From the Reformation it became common for the Royal Coat of Arms to be displayed in churches. The Arms above the doorway to the tower are from the reign of William III (who reigned with his wife jointly from 1688 to 1694 and alone after her death until 1702) and bear the date 1695.

The central shield is divided into four quarters – the red lion "rampant" on a gold background for Scotland on the top right and the silver harp on a blue background for Ireland on the bottom left. The other two quarters contain the arms of England of the period which are further subdivided ; two quarters show the three parallel lions

“couchant” which have symbolised England from the middle ages to the present day , and the other two the fleur de lys of France, reflecting the claim of the English monarch to the throne of France from 1340 onwards. The claim was only abandoned in 1801, by which time France was a republic.

Around the shield is the motto of the Order of the Garter “ Honi Soit qui mal y pense” (Let there be evil to the one who thinks evil”) whilst below the shield is another motto “Dieu et mon Droit” (God and my Right; the motto of the Monarch of England since Henry V.

The shield has two supporters, the Lion of England and the Unicorn of Scotland.

Hatchments

The most important heraldic objects in the church however are the four hatchments. Between the 16th and 19th centuries the coats of arms of important people who died were often displayed outside their house for several months on wooden boards called “hatchments”. This custom finally died out only in the 1940’s. After the period of mourning these hatchments were moved to the parish church where they are still often seen.

The three boards on the south wall of the nave are rectangular – generally less common than the lozenge shape of the one on the north wall.

The highest, smallest one, bears the arms “Or, a lion rampant sable armed and langued gules, on a chief of the second a castle triple towered or between two bezants” on the dexter side of the shield. Impaled on the other side the arms are quartered; in the first and 4th quarter the arms are “ gules, a chevron ermine between three goats heads erased” whilst the 2nd and 3rd quarter are “ a chevron gules within a bordure sable bezanty”.

This is thought to be the arms of Lewis Stokitt, who died in 1579, and this is therefore one of the oldest hatchments known.

The two below show also show quartering, and some of the elements are shared, indicating that the people for whom they were made were related.

The board on the left (more easterly) bears a motto “Fratres in Unum” (brothers in unity) and the name of the person for whom it was made: “Edward Aylworth Esquire High Steward of ye Geo Lord Archb: of Cant. He died ye XIJ of September 1625. Anno etatis sui 73 (in his 73rd year)

Geo Lord Archb: of Cant refers to **George Abbot** , Archbishop of Canterbury from 1611 until 1633)

The shield has four different quarters:

1 A fess engrailed between two billets gules

2. Argent a mollet sable

3. vert a fess dancetty ermine

4. argent a chevron between three periwigs sable.

There is a tiny red (gules) rose on the shield. This is known as a differencing or cadency mark, which means that Edward was a 7th son.

These arms are also seen on the left (dexter) side of the hatchment to the right, and the surname on the inscription ("Walter Alyworth Esq died June 10 1614") is the same – genealogical records show they were brothers. The small red (gules) cadency crescent indicates that Walter was the second son. Only the background on the left side of this board however is black; the grey background to his wife's arms impaled on the right side of the board indicates that she was still living when the board was made. Her arms are the same as those of Lewis Stokitt, indicating she was his descendant (in fact his daughter Joan).

The lozenge shaped board with a black background on the north wall bears the arms "argent, two lions rampant gules supporting between them a tower sable." They appear on a lozenge rather than a shield indicating that the bearer was a woman. There is a skull below – a symbol of death often seen in hatchments and monuments. This is thought to have been made either for the Elizabeth Kelley who died in 1841 and whose tomb is in the churchyard or for her daughter (also Elizabeth).

Monuments

There are more than 30 memorial slabs on the walls of the church and over graves in the chancel from all periods from the 16th to 20th century. The most remarkable is the Manwood memorial, but many others are also of interest.

Just inside the south door is a memorial tablet to Lavinia, wife of Sir Roger Manwood's grandson John which describes her virtues, and is covered by an unusual iron grill.

The war memorial from 1919 near the font lists the names of 16 men who died in the First World War. There are four war graves from World War II in the east end of the cemetery – three the standard pattern of the war graves commission and the fourth a family grave. There is also a memorial in the north transept to an airman who died in 1944.

The chancel floor has memorial slabs over the grave of Rev John Bunce, who was Vicar of the church for 53 years in the eighteenth century, and over those of his three wives and 2 other family members. High up on the north wall of the sanctuary is an unusual memorial to close male friendship between William the son of Rev Bunce and his friend William Carter who "lived in a course of uninterrupted friendship for sixty years and in the grave were not divided". Such male friendships (not necessarily sexual) were not uncommon at this time – St John Henry Newman was

similarly buried with his close friend Some however have seen it as an early sign of the tradition of inclusive Christianity which this church now supports.

Acknowledgements

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The sketch of possible floor plans of the church is taken from the MA Thesis by Caroline Dumais-Turpin written in 2003 on the History, Fabric and Legend of the Church from its foundation to the sixteen century.

The photographs of Sir Roger Manwood were kindly provided by Mr Robert Matthews.

Thanks are due to all the above for their help in preparing this guide.