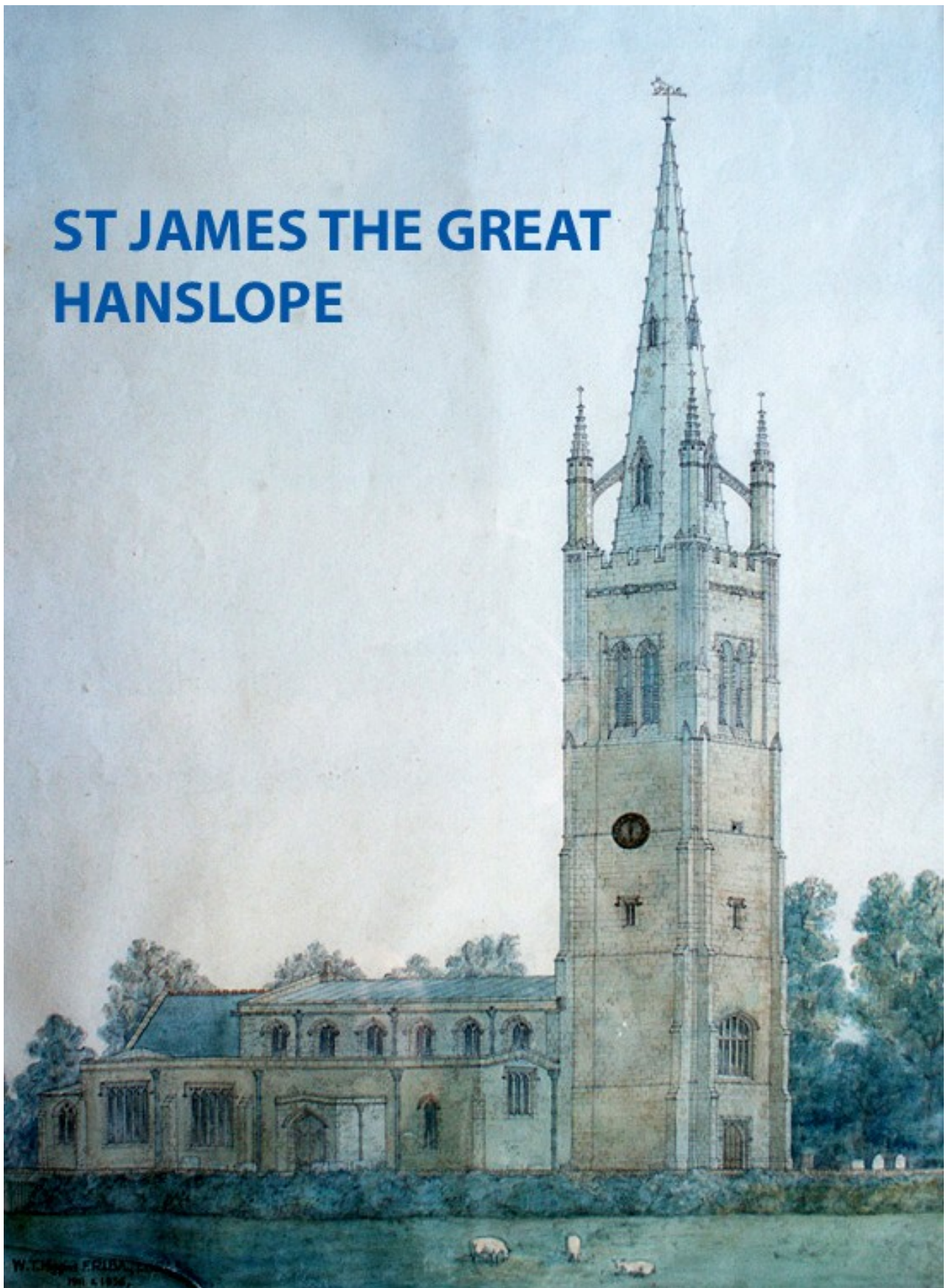


ST JAMES THE GREAT HANSLOPE



The cover photograph is a watercolour drawing of the church done in 1934 by William Higgins (1886-1966), a local architect whose father ran the Swan public house.

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The Church of St James the Great, Hanslope

Introduction

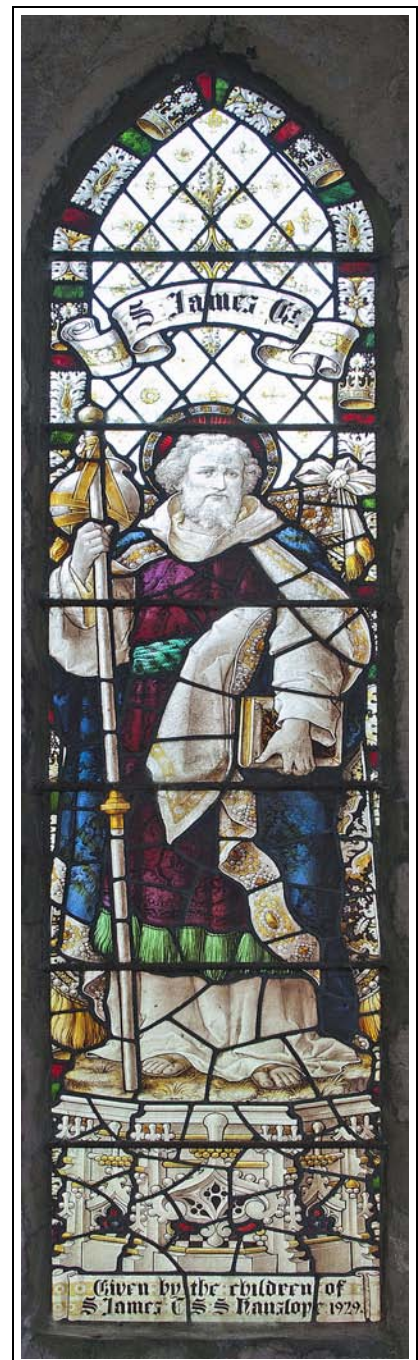
St James the Great at Hanslope is a noted local landmark and has the highest tower in Buckinghamshire. The style of the building, with external storey arcading, is unusual in Britain, and it is very large for a village church, probably reflecting the local connection with the Earls of Warwick. Its origins are 12th century, dating from 1160 when William Maudit, lord of the manor of Hanslope and a chamberlain of the Royal Exchequer (a royal official, treasurer), applied to the Bishop of Lincoln to have an earlier church pulled down and rebuilt.

The site of that earlier church is unknown, but in his history of the church in 1966, RW Garrett said that the Saxon church was believed to have been outside the village to the south, east of the present Park Road, near Ivy Farm.

Through marriage to a daughter of the Earl of Warwick, a Maudit succeeded to the earldom in 1263 and the manor continued to be held by Warwicks until the last earl, 'Warwick the king-maker', was killed at the Battle of Barnet in 1471. During those 200 years, as Warwick power and influence grew, there were both additions to and rebuilding of the church, including the aisles, tower and spire, making it exceptionally large for a medieval village church. Thereafter, the manor reverted to the Crown and there is little evidence of further building.

The church is dedicated to St James the Great, one of the twelve apostles of Christ. St James was reputedly buried at Santiago de Compostela, which by the 12th century had come to rank with Rome and Jerusalem as one of the great destinations of medieval pilgrimage. Many churches in Britain were dedicated to St James the Great and may have been on the pilgrimage routes of the middle ages.

This stained glass window in the children's corner of the north aisle was made by Percy Bacon in 1929 and depicts the church's patron, St James. It was given by pupils' and teachers' donations.



In the 14th century Castlethorpe was combined with Hanslope following the 'Great Pestilence', which rendered Castlethorpe unable to support its own chaplain.

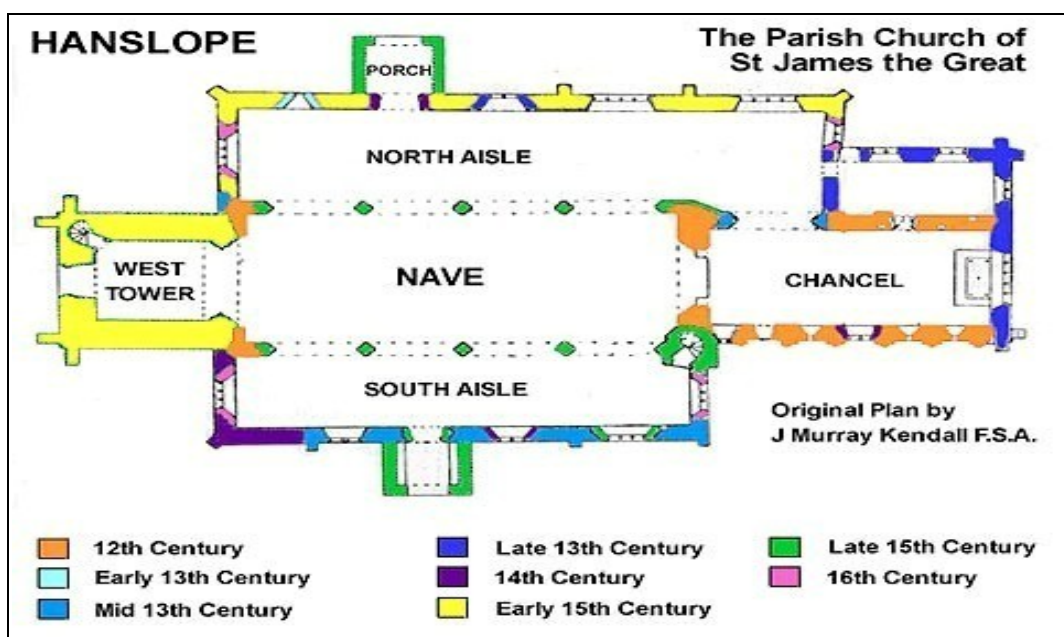
In 1546 Henry VIII sold the advowson (the right to appoint the rector or vicar) along with the glebe lands, the right to the tithes and to endow a perpetual vicarage, to the 'mayor, sheriffs, citizens and commonality' of Lincoln.

Building over the centuries

The 12th century church was probably about the same size as the present chancel and nave, from the east window to the tower, without the aisles. The rounded Norman arch between the chancel and nave suggests that the original building included the nave. However, the only remaining parts of a Norman building are now in the chancel, and it too has been subject to much rebuilding.

Broadly, building and rebuilding took place as follows:

- 13th century - North and south aisles added
North chapel (Chapel of Our Lady and St Benedict) added, east wall rebuilt, and north aisle extended to meet the chapel.
- 14th century - An extra bay added to the west end of the south aisle
- 15th century - Tower and spire built
North aisle and nave rebuilt, nave arcades and clerestory added
North and south porches added



The main body of the church from the east window to the west door is 41.5 m (136 ft) long. It is 18.5 m (61 ft) wide, and the spire is 57 m (186 ft) high.

N. Pevsner says that both aisles are remarkably wide for their date, as was the Norman nave before the aisles existed.

Over 800 years there has been so much rebuilding and alteration in the church that tracing the origin of some architectural features is very difficult. There is evidence of rebuilding of the east and north walls of the chancel as early as the 13th century.

More recently, the spire was rebuilt (some 6 m shorter) after it was destroyed by lightning in 1804, and the west end of the south aisle may have been rebuilt at this time. Other improvements introduced at that time were lighting by candles in brass chandeliers, and an organ.

Records show that £190 was spent in 1810-11 on 'pewing'. This perhaps represents the installation of the old box pews. The Watts gallery and vault were built at this time.

The church must have been in poor repair by the 19th century when it was heavily restored by the diocesan architect, George E Street over the years 1864-5.



The nave before 1904

In 1904-5 more repairs and refurbishments were undertaken under the direction of the architect J Oldrid Scott, FSA. The floors were lifted, and wall paintings, believed to date from the 15th to 17th centuries, were removed from the north and south aisles and over the chancel arch. William Whitbread, who lived in the village, took particular interest in the work, and interestingly, comments that Scott was too far away to take the necessary interest and attention that the job needed. In fact it seems that he not only recorded what was being done, but personally took an active hand in, for instance, discovering and unblocking the holy water stoup by the north entrance and the piscina near the altar in the south aisle.



The nave during 1904-5 repairs

In the medieval period, the walls of the church would have been covered with biblical paintings and other decorations. Some may have been removed or covered up during the Cromwellian period. However, much of the remaining painting was removed when plaster was taken from the walls during the 1904/05 refurbishments. At the time, these were mentioned specifically: a series of three paintings over the east window in the south aisle, traces of a painting over the chancel arch, traces of a painting above the entrance to the rood loft, a cross in blue on a white ground on the north side of the chancel arch, a large wall painting over the Easter sepulchre arch in the south aisle, and on the north aisle wall over the sepulchral arch a large painting of angels and other figures.

During this refurbishment some evidence was found of a fire, believed to have occurred early in the 17th century, so there may have been some repairs or rebuilding then.

There have been frequent repairs to the roof. An earlier history of the church mentioned an inscription on a truss against the east wall recording the repair of the two east bays of the roof in 1870, and that an 'original' 15th century truss remained in the north aisle roof. Neither of these are now evident. More recently, repairs to the roof are recorded in 1872, 1899, 1904-5 and in 1924-5, when the plaster was stripped from the walls.

Pews only appeared in churches at the end of the medieval period. Prior to that parishioners stood, or 'went to the wall' if infirm. After the Reformation, private seating appeared in churches, which could be rented or even left in a will. Hanslope originally had box pews, but these were replaced during early 20th century refurbishments. The church was granted £125 by the Incorporated Church Building Society towards repairs in 1924 'upon condition that 236 sittings' were provided for the free use of parishioners. Oak pews were installed in 1929 in the nave and north aisle with a £500 bequest from William Thomas Smart of East Haddon, who had been a church warden. And in about 1958 or 1959, more new oak pews were installed and half of the nave was re-floored with wood blocks, which have covered some old grave slabs and brasses. In 1998 the pews were moved from a conventional aisle arrangement to the current central altar configuration.



The nave today

North Porch

A visitor to the church will enter through the north porch, which was added in the 14th century and has the original moulded timber roof.

Outside, over the door of the entrance can be seen a mark in the stonework which is believed to be a symbol indicating that the church was connected with pilgrimage in medieval times. As the church is dedicated to St James the Great, it is possible that there was some now-lost connection with his cult.



The etched glass internal door was designed by David Peace and executed by Sally Scott in May 1999, who also completed glass work at Christ the Cornerstone in Milton Keynes. It was a bequest from parishioners Frank and Edith Brownsell.

The Nave

The only remaining part of an original 12th century nave is preserved in the Norman Romanesque chancel arch.



The stair turret at the south-east angle of the nave dates from the later 15th century. It provided access to a rood screen above the chancel arch, of which the only trace now is the loft doorway in the south side of the arch.



The last traces of wall paintings can be seen near the rood screen door above the south side of the arch, where there is a remnant of a painting of the Warwick badge, the bear and ragged staff, with an inscribed scroll, now illegible. The ground was red with yellow foliage, and the bear and staff white.

As recently as 1927 it was recorded that a white figure on a blue ground was just visible on the chancel arch, above the level of the loft door.

The font is 19th century and was moved to its present position in 1999 from a central position at the rear of the nave. It has an oak top given by the Girl's Friendly Society in 1924.

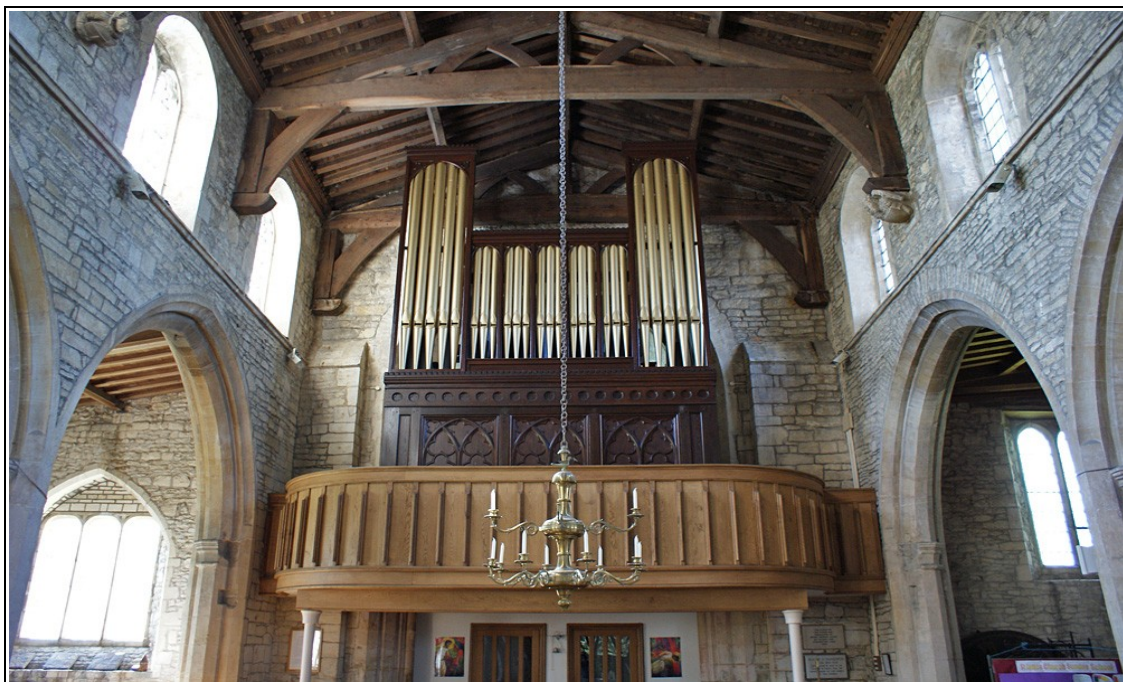
The pulpit is probably 18th century; Pevsner says c. 1800. During the 1905 refurbishment an older font was reworked to form a pedestal for the pulpit.



At the level of the clerestory windows there are three stone corbels remaining from the original roof, with carved angels. Two angels are playing musical instruments: one appears to be an ancient horn, and the other is supposed to be a mandore, a plucked instrument similar to a lute which was popular in the 12th and 13th centuries.



The present roof itself dates from about 1924-5. It has tie beams supported on wall posts and brackets which carry heavy principal rafters, king posts and curved ties. It replaces an earlier roof of 1770, dated on the tie beams at the east end.



Following more than five years of fundraising in the community, a refurbished organ from St Andrew's, Headington, and dating from the mid 1920s, was installed in 2009 by FH Browne & Co. The organ pipes are on a balcony constructed in about 2000, which replaced an older one. The balcony was constructed with reinforced steel beams to enable an organ to be placed on it. This was part of a major development of the tower area, which included the provision of a vestry, disabled accessible toilets and a meeting room. The funding for this development came from the Millennium lotteries fund & the rural churches in community service & entrust.



The large central chandelier was the gift of Rev William Singleton in 1838. Nine smaller chandeliers were donated in 1839 by churchwarden Thomas Shrieve of Hales Folly, Hanslope.

Over the chancel arch two hatchments of the Watts family flank the coat of arms of King William IV. After the restoration of the monarchy in 1660 it was obligatory to display the monarch's arms as the head of the church.

In front of the chancel arch is a grave slab, sadly missing most of the original brass decoration, with figures of a man and two women. This is a memorial to one Lewis Rees and his two wives. He was apparently a local representative (bailiff) of the Crown at the time the manor was in the hands of the Tudors.



In the Harley collection of the British Library the epitaph which originally belonged to this burial site is recorded. It reads:

Pray for the soul of Lewis ap Rees Gent, and late Balife of this Towne, & Servant to K Hen VIII. and of Elizabeth and Agnes his Wifes. He decessid 1 July 1523.

Two labels issue from the mouths of the ladies with the words, '*Sancta Trinitas unus Deus*' and '*Miserare nobis*': Holy Trinity one God; Have mercy on us.

At the other end of the nave the 'one remaining brass monument' (as noted in 1990) is no longer visible, being under more recent flooring. It was the grave of Mary, daughter of Thomas Birchmore, Hanslope's miller, who died on 31 January 1602. The inscription was in Latin:

Marmore sub hoc requiescit Corpus Mariae filliae Thomae Birchmore expectantis Resurrectione Gloruae quae hac e vita decessit vitimo die Janvarij Ano Domini 1602. Cum sextum annum aetatis suae compleverat. Christus solus mihi Salus.

Translated as: 'Beneath this marble lies the body of Mary daughter of Thomas Birchmore expecting resurrection in glory departed this life the last day of January in the Year of our Lord 1602. She had completed six years of life. Christ alone is salvation for me.'

South aisle

The altar at the east end of south aisle is now a memorial to the Hanslope fallen of the two World Wars.

The stained glass window over the altar, made by Percy Bacon (1860-1935) of Newman Street, London in 1921, is of St George, St Michael and St Alban. It was donated by subscription and dedicated as a war memorial.



The altar frontal cloth was handmade by Ellen Rose Neale and her sister Mabel Phyllis Mary Neale and given to the church in 1950.

There is an arched piscina in the north wall next to the altar. The basin no longer exists, but a rough shelf remains.



The basin no longer exists, but a rough shelf remains. These stone basins, found next to altars, were used in the medieval period for disposal of water used in the Mass. This one was excavated by Mr Whitbread during the 1904/05 works. It has been altered, the credence shelf removed and the opening extended downwards and not provided with a replacement wall drain.

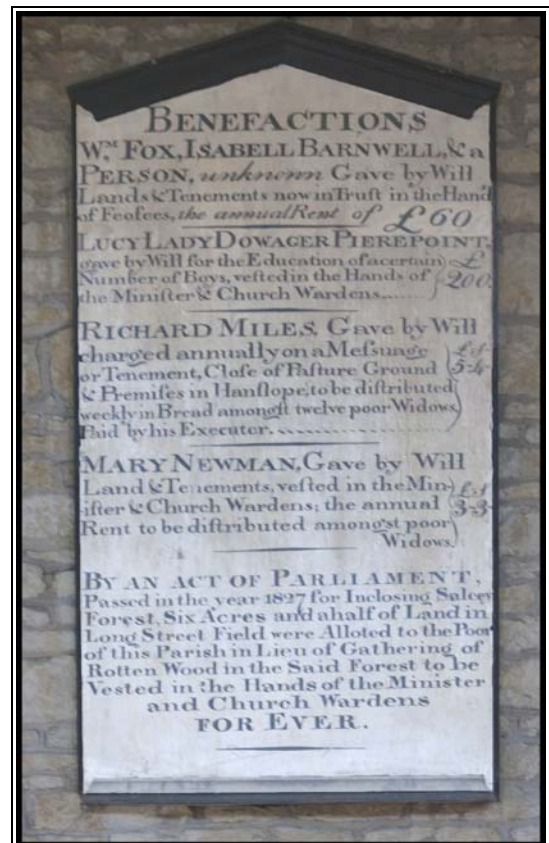


The stone arch with a symbolic tomb chest inserted into the south wall of this aisle is thought to be an Easter sepulchre, where the Resurrection would have been re-enacted during the medieval period. The Host (bread consecrated at Mass) would have been 'buried' on Good Friday and removed at the first Mass of Easter. The style of the arch is 13th century.

This feature was most usually in the north side of the chancel, so this one has probably been moved to this site from the chancel at some time.

A plaque on the wall of the south aisle records various charitable benefactions for the parishioners of Hanslope. The plaque also refers to the 1827 Inclosure of Salcey Forest, when 6½ acres in Long Street Field were allotted for the poor of the parish in lieu of gathering wood in the forest.

The 15th century south porch is now used as a kitchen. On the wall near its doorway is a Watts family hatchment, and on the other side of the door is a list of all the rectors and vicars since the year 1227.

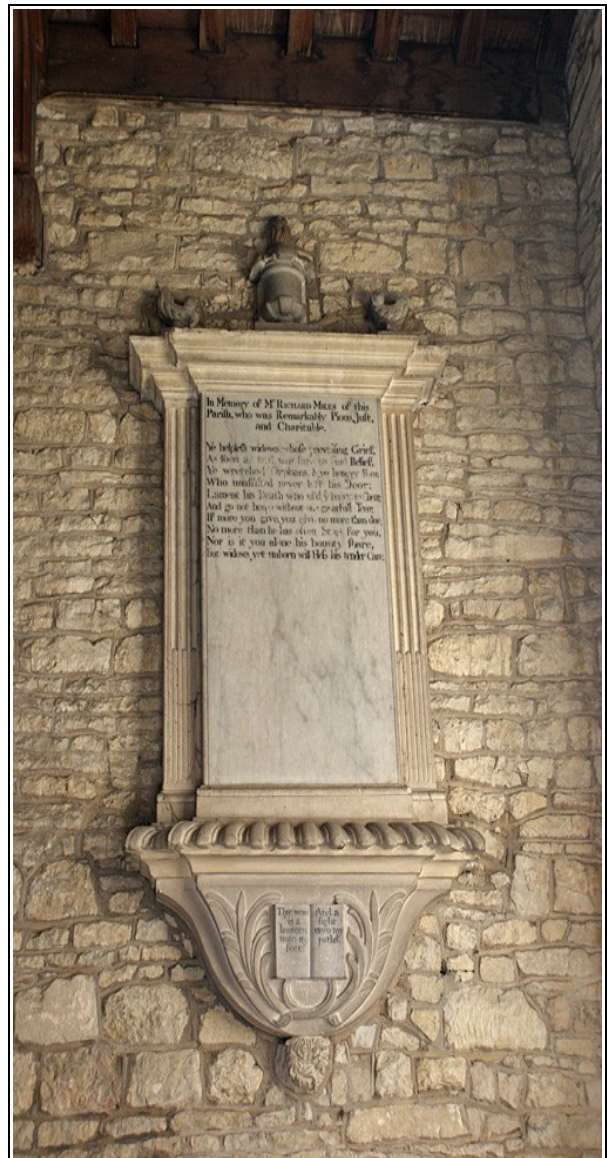




In the west window of the south aisle is a group of encaustic, or inlaid, tiles, apparently salvaged from the original flooring. D Mynard, who excavated the kilns at Little Brickhill, has identified the Hanslope tiles as having been made there in the late 15th century. Amongst them there are pieces of green-glazed tile from some other unidentified source.

A very decorative wall monument, typical of the Georgian period, commemorates Richard Miles, who built a gallery in the west end of the nave in 1724. In the floor near it at the west end of the south aisle is the gravestone of Richard Miles and his second wife Mary.

His gallery was replaced in 2000 by the existing one.



North aisle

The east end of the north aisle is dominated by the 18th century burial vault of the Watts family, Hanslope squires for 150 years. William Watts purchased the manor of Hanslope in 1764, after making his fortune in India where he participated in the conquest of Bengal by the British East India Company. His daughter, Amelia, was the mother of Robert Jenkinson, 2nd Earl of Liverpool and British Prime Minister 1812 - 1827. She sadly died shortly after the birth of her son, at only 20 years old.



The Watts vault

A plaque in the north aisle commemorates repairs to the roof in 1899, 1905 and 1925.

Near the north porch is a holy water niche, exposed in 1904-5, and an arched vault entrance. The vault is below ground, next to the north entrance.

The children's corner, with its stained glass window of St James the Great at the west end of the aisle, was provided in 1951 by Henry Thomas Geary of Tathall End. The gilt-framed Lord's Prayer, Creed, and Ten Commandments displayed here were made obligatory in churches in 1603, and were most likely displayed on each side of the rood screen originally, though it is not known when the rood screen was removed.

At the corner of the tower here are two stone coffins which were found near the sepulchre arch in the south aisle when the floor was relaid in 1906. The coffins are believed to be 14th century, but about 50 years apart in age.

The fact that they are stone indicates burials of people of some note. There were two sets of bones in one of the coffins, thought at the time to be of an elderly person and one of about 45-50 years of age, and probably not buried in the coffin at the same time. The second coffin contained the bones of a person estimated at the time to be 40-50 years old. The bones were reburied in the churchyard on the north side of the church.

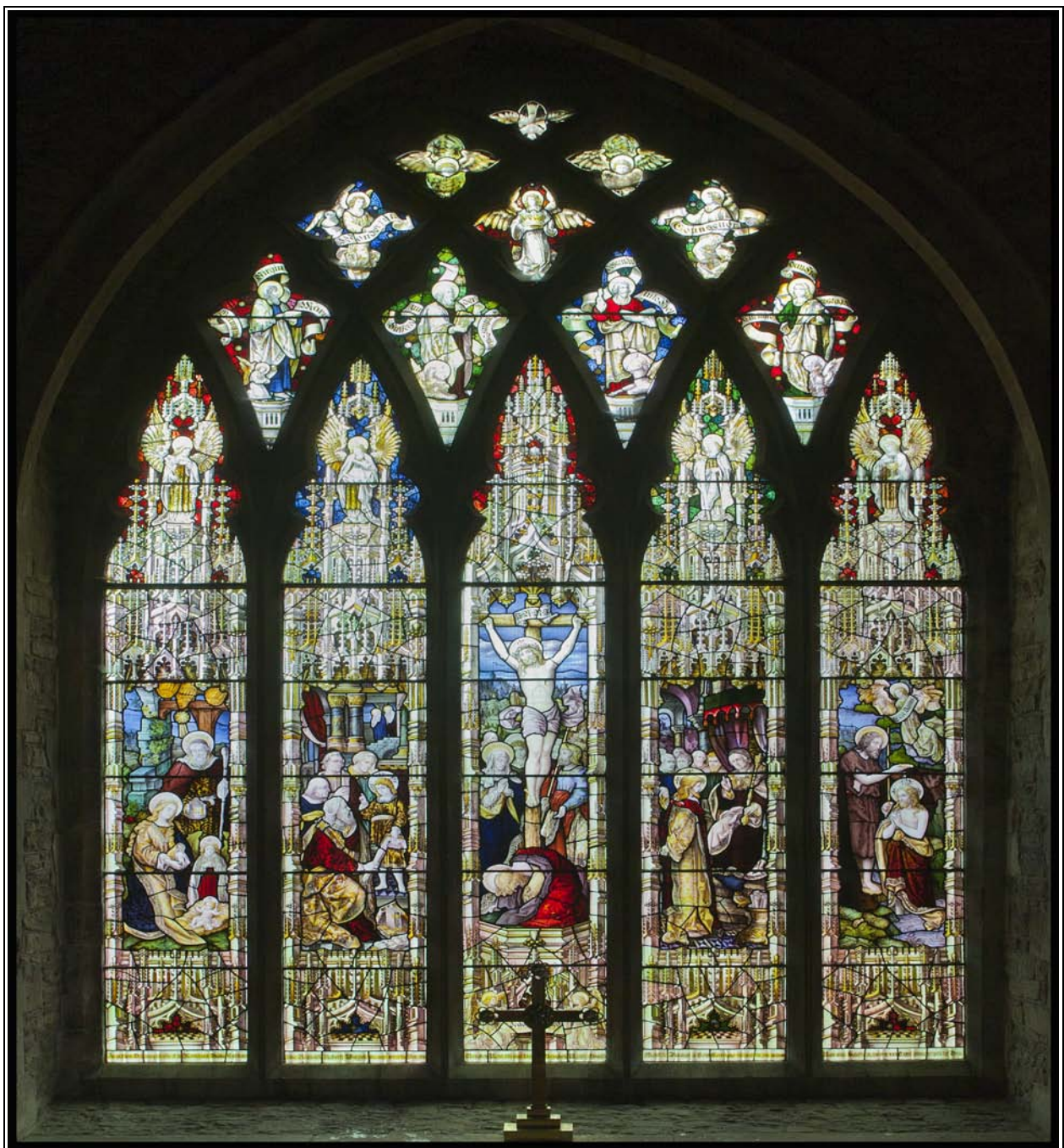
Here is also the iron mechanism and copper clock face from the original steeple clock, which dates from 1700-1720. It was driven by weights and had to be wound by hand every day. It was replaced in 1953 by an electrically wound turret clock made by Cope of Nottingham and donated by Henry Thomas Geary of Tathall End. In about 1999 the electric mechanism was replaced with the current electric clock by Smith of Derby.



The chancel

The chancel is the oldest part of the church , dating from the 12th century, with many later additions.

The east wall of the chancel is dominated by a 14th century window with fine intersecting tracery. The stained glass is Victorian, made in 1893 by Percy Bacon of London and commemorates Diana Caroline Monk, daughter of Reginald Robert Walpole and Caroline Watts. She died in 1891 at the age of 34. Its five lights depict the Nativity, Christ with the elders in the temple, the Crucifixion, Christ facing Pontius Pilate, and the baptism of Christ by St John.





There are two stone slabs, which would once have included brass decoration, located in the centre of the chancel floor. They have no inscription, but are reputed to be the burial places of former rectors Thurston Keswick (de Hanslap), Rector in 1300, and Peter le Blund, Rector in 1297-1300 and 1301.

The sedilia on the south wall are the dominant feature of the chancel. These were seating for the clergy. To the west of them is an aumbry, a niche once used for storing the communion sacrament and vessels.



Also in the south wall is a 12th century priest's doorway into the chancel. It has a splendid chevron design, best seen from outside. (See page 26)

The two-light stained glass window in the south wall depicts the Sermon on the Mount and was made in 1884 by William Worrall (1831-1911), a stained glass artist of Regents Park, London.

It is dedicated to Edmund Wyatt Edgell, a captain in the 17th Lancers, who was killed at the final battle of the Anglo-Zulu War in 1879. There is also a monument to him at the family home of Stanford, Northants.

Why this commemorative window is in Hanslope, and who commissioned it, is not known, but it seems likely that there must have been some connection with the Watts family.



On the north side of the chancel the external stonework has been partly renewed.



A doorway has been inserted into the north chapel (Chapel of Our Lady and St Benedict), to the west of it is an aumbry, with a restored length of the 12th century stringcourse above it. Over the doorway to the chapel is a 12th century window in round-headed Romanesque style, the external lintel carved with radial leaf motifs.

The remainder of the wall is occupied by a late 13th century arch opening into 'Troughton's chapel', the extended east end of the north aisle, now cut off by the Watts tomb. The new oak screen and doors, designed by Alan Frost, were installed in 2010. The old organ that was situated in the archway was removed at the time.

In the floor of the northeast corner of the chancel is the burial slab of Basil Brent, who built Hanslope Park House. It is inscribed:

Here lies interred y body of Basill Brent Esq son and heir of Sr Nathaniel Brent aged 65 years. Dyed y 4 of August 1695.



Other stone slabs in the floor along the north and south walls in the chancel mark the burials of former vicars:

Gulielmus Ward huj Ecol ob Sept 23 1714.

The Rvr Mr Shadrach Garmston Vicar of this Parish died October 18 1741 Age 55 years. And Elizabeth Garmston.

Some other burial slabs are no longer visible, where the floor has been carpeted:

Sacred to the memory of Rev James Mayne vicar of this parish died Feb 7th 1851 aged 76 years.

Here lyeth the Body of Eliz. Golding, daughter of Thomas Golding of Poslington in the County of Suffolk, Esq. She departed this life July 30, in the year of our Lord God 1635.

Chapel of Our Lady and St Benedict

This chapel is a 13th century addition on the north side of the chancel. It has been a vestry, but now is used as a Sunday school room.

Pevsner dates a north window here and in the room to the west to late 13th century.

One nearly complete bay of the external arcading on the chancel wall remains. Notable is the remaining part of a pillar which would have originally been on the outside wall, matching those on the opposite side of the church. Both this room and the one to the west of it contain a jumble of old stone corbels which have been reused during early rebuilding.



In the south-east corner of this room is a richly carved piscina with a fluted basin, evidence that this room was once used for services.

In 1324 a chantry was founded to say masses 'in the Chapel of Our Lady in the said parish Church of Hanslope' for the soul of Thurstan Keswick (or de Hanslap), who was the vicar of Hanslope in 1300.

The chantry was valued at £8 per year in 1547, when Edward VI abolished chantries.

Troughton's Chapel

Now used primarily for storage, this room on the north side of the chancel was an extension of the north aisle, before the addition of the Watts vault cut it off from the rest of the aisle.

The window in this room contains fragments of 15th/16th century glass. The staircase, of oak twisted balusters with vases, is probably early 18th century . It provides access to a gallery which once had pews for the Watts family.

There is a burial stone in the floor dedicated to the parents of Richard Troughton (1577-1639). His father, also Richard, died in 1621. The Troughtons held the manor of Castlethorpe in the early 17th century, Castlethorpe being an annexed parish to Hanslope. The inscription reads:

*Within the center of this marble stone
The Bodies of my dearest Parents lye:
They were Deaths right, he claimes them as his owne,
Thire Soules to Heaven, their fames are mounted highe:
He Troughton hight, A Hampden she by birthe,
Whom Heaven stole hence too good too live on earth:
Yet this they left too their immortall praise:
They Livd well, died well, full of happie dayes:
Composed in duetye by their beeloved Sonne
Richard Troughton*

There are other gravestones in the floor of this room which read:

Here lyeth the Body of Thomas Chapman, son of Thomas Chapman, Esq. and Elizabeth his wife, who departed this life March 15th 1691-2.

Here lyeth the Body of Anne, daughter of Thomas Chapman and Elizabeth his wife, an Infant, who departed January the 15th 1693-4.

Here lyeth the Body of Rebecca, daughter of Thomas Chapman and Elizabeth his wife, who was buried June 1688.

The Tower



The impressive tower at the west end of the church has a crocketed spire, pinnacles and flying buttresses. Thomas Knight, rector from 1395 to 1414, left money in his will for its construction, so the tower presumably was built sometime after that date. The stone was brought from Ketton, Rutlandshire. It was originally 69m (200ft 6in) high, but after being destroyed by lightning in 1804 was rebuilt 6m (20ft) shorter.

The spire is topped by a weather vane of a hound with an arrow through its foot, depicting an incident in India when William Watts, the first Watts squire of Hanslope, was saved from a dog attacking him.

G Lipscombe records the following story about the repair of the weather vane, though does not give a date. Robert Cadman, a steeplejack, was engaged to repair the weather vane. He climbed the steeple without ladders or scaffolding, but with a drum, with which he amused himself by beating at the top of the steeple. When he came down, he left it behind. Afterwards, having gotten intoxicated, he could scarcely be restrained from going up for it in that state in the evening, as he was afraid somebody might steal it in the night. However, it remained there safely until the morning, when he climbed,

again unaided, and brought it down without accident. Rather unsurprisingly, he eventually died falling from another church steeple.

In the early 1960s the spire was found to be deteriorating and about 4m of the top was replaced, along with repairs to the pinnacles and flying buttresses. The weather vane was repaired and covered with gold leaf by Robert Courtman in 1963.

Inside the tower are two fire hooks, used to pull thatch from the roofs of houses in case of fire. They were last used at a fire at Lincoln Lodge Farm in 1840.



The tower destroyed by lightning

On Sunday 23 June 1804 the church spire was struck by lightning and fell onto the west end of the south aisle of the church during 'the most tremendous storm of thunder and lightning ever remembered by the oldest inhabitant'.

The octagonal spire was rebuilt the following year. Its original height of 63m (206ft) was reduced by 6m (20ft) in the rebuilding. The spire tapers, from about halfway up, to accommodate this.

The Hanslope Churchwarden's Accounts for 1806 show the following expenditure:

The Expenses in Rebuilding the Spire of Hanslope Church

<i>Gave John Cheshire by agreement</i>	<i>850. 0.0</i>
<i>Gave Do towards his expenses at Northampton with the stones when loading</i>	<i>2. 0.0</i>
<i>Pd Mr Hall for James Bishop's Bill</i>	<i>4.0</i>
<i>Pd Branson to repair the wall</i>	<i>8.0</i>
<i>Pd John Stimpston for Carting stones from Northampton to Hanslope</i>	<i>2. 0.0</i>
<i>Pd Labours to go to Northampton</i>	<i>6.0</i>
<i>Pd Mr John Manning for Carting & Churchyard</i>	<i>2. 2.0</i>
<i>Pd for Stamps</i>	<i>8.0</i>
<i>Pd all that was gave to the men when rebuilding Spire</i>	<i>1.10.0</i>
<i>Pd Mr Cheshire for men to move the rubbish in the Spire</i>	<i>10.0</i>
<i>Pd for letters</i>	<i>5.0</i>
<i>Pd Mrs Gurney bill</i>	<i><u>15.0</u></i>
	<i>860. 8.0</i>

In the early 1960s repairs were again made to the spire, pinnacles, flying buttresses and the weather vane. The buttresses were completely rebuilt in 1979 and now have a base of reinforced concrete.

The Bells

There are eight bells in the tower, regularly rung by a side (team) of Hanslope bellringers.

It is believed that the tower probably had four bells by 1626, and there were five bells recorded in 1714.



In 1906 Stanfield Nicholson presented a new bell (no.3) in memory of his father, Rev M A Nicholson, who had been the vicar here for 41 years. At the same time one of the older bells (no.6) was re-cast.

In 1947 two additional bells were added, dedicated on 23 November 1947 by the Lord Bishop of Oxford.

Bell	Cast by	Date	Weight & Diameter	Inscription
Treble bell	Mears and Stainbank (The Whitechapel Foundry) London; hung by Thomas White of Appleton	1947	266 kg. 73.66 cm.	Dedicated to the glorious memory of those of this parish who made the supreme sacrifice and all who served their King and Country in the Two Great Wars. 1914-1918. 1939-1945.
No. 2	Mears and Stainbank (The Whitechapel Foundry) London; hung by Thomas White of Appleton	1947	342.8 kg. 76.7 cm.	Dedicated to the memory of a beloved vicar Rev William Jardine Harkness MA and his wife Frances. 1892-1929.
No. 3	Alfred Bowell Founders, Ipswich	1906	304.8 kg. 81.25 cm.	To the glory of God and in memory of Mark Anthony Nicholson MA, 42 years Vicar. Presented by his son Stansfield Nicholson. William Jardine Harkness MA Vicar.
No. 4	Robert Taylor, St Neots	1815	431.6 kg. 91.5 cm.	R Taylor, St Neots, fecit 1815. R Rogers, C Warden
No. 5	William Hall, Drayton Parslow	1752	512.7 kg. 92.9 cm.	Hall made me 1752
No. 6	Re-cast by Alfred Bowell, Ipswich	1906	571.5 kg. 97.5 cm.	God save Kyng Charls 1625
No. 7	Robert Atton, Buckingham	1626	762 kg. 109.2.cm.	God save Kyng Charls 1626
No. 8	John Briant, Hertford	1814	1118 kg. 127 cm.	John Briant Hertford fecit 1814. John Kitele ,CW

Parish records record a sad accident in the bell tower:

'In 1867 Joseph James Green from Church End, aged 19 an exemplary Young Man assistant to Mr. Fitch, draper was on Friday the 17th May killed while ringing the usual 9.30 A.M. Bell which, not being secured by a stay, turned over and carried poor Green up aloft, and being struck on the head by the beam fell never to recover. He died after a few hours of insensibility. Much Regretted.'

There is a plaque in the bell-ringing room commemorating 1891, when five bells were quarter-turned and rehung by Taylors of Loughborough, and the supporting beams built by H Cox of Hanslope, at a cost of £175-13s-9p.

Further repairs and refurbishment of the bell fittings were undertaken in 1979 and 1994.

Two constables' ceremonial truncheons are kept at the church, one with the arms of William IV hand painted on wood, dating from 1831, and one in wood and brass engraved with 'VR' and 'T Shrieve, Hanslope'. They are no longer on display.

Parish records

The church registers of baptisms, marriages and burials date from 1571. Among other documents are a 'Quality Book' giving the proprietors and occupiers of every house in Hanslope in April 1833, and 'A List of Paupers desirous of Emigrating from Hanslope' of 1844 together with details of the charge on the parish of £229.10.0.

Clergy

The first recorded Rector was instituted in 1227. The living was valued at £40 in 1291. The presentation of vicars was the right of the Manor of Hanslope until 1522, when the rectory was annexed and appropriated by the Crown to the Collegiate Church of Leicester. By Letters Patent dated 11 December 1546, the the rectory, advowson and patronage were bestowed on the Corporation of the City of Lincoln, and a perpetual vicarage was endowed to take effect at the death of the incumbent Rector.

The significance of this is reflected in the source of remuneration; the Rector's income was derived from the glebe lands and tithes, whereas the Vicar was paid a stipend. In 1559 the City of Lincoln leased its right for 20 years at an annual rent of £60 plus £14 13s 4d to be paid to the vicar. In 1861 the vicarage was valued at £90 per year.

Exterior points of interest

The exterior walling of the body of the church is composed of limestone rubble, the tower is faced with ashlar, straight-edged stone blocks. A walk around the outside of the church reveals a number of interesting features:

On the northwest corner of the tower is a carving of the bear and ragged staff, the emblem of the Earls of Warwick.

The oak west doors, under the tower, were provided in memory of the Grocock family, and a plaque to that effect is near them.



On the south side of the church is the 'priest's door' into the chancel, with its ornate stone carving. This doorway is a glorious example of late Norman work, consisting of an arch with moulded bases and decorated capitals, flower and leaf motifs and a bold chevron pattern. The pillars along the the chancel walls are an unusual feature in a Norman church.



Two very faint 'scratch dials' can be seen carved in the stonework at about eye-level on the south-facing walls. One is next to the priest's door and the other at the south porch door. These were a medieval method of indicating the times of masses in the church.

There is much interesting stonework on the nave roof, which is visible only by standing back to view over the aisle roofs.

On the north side, toward the east end, there is a remarkable gargoyle, or waterspout, in the form of a man laying on his side, with the spout over his shoulder, and wearing an embossed belt and a short apron.



On the south side, again above the aisle roof, there is a large gryphon-like carving.



The churchyard

The churchyard has been a burial ground for the village since Norman times.

Among those buried here is Joseph Knibb, the famous clockmaker. He retired to Hanslope in 1697, possibly through ill-health, after a career in Oxford and London. He was buried on 14 December 1711, but the site of his grave is not known.

To the northwest of the church, adjacent to the pathway and churchyard wall, is a gravestone marking the burial site of Alexander (Sandy) M'Kay, the British prize fight champion of 1830, who died at the Watts Arms after a fight at Salcey Green.

At the far edge of the graveyard is the gravestone of William Farrow, the gamekeeper who shot and killed Squire Watts on his way home from the church in July 1912. Intriguingly, the inscription reads:

'In Loving memory of William Farrow The dearly beloved husband of Annie Farrow who died July 21st 1912 aged 45 years Waiting till all shall be revealed'



The church today

St James the Great continues to be a busy parish church providing vibrant worship every Sunday at 11:00am and on numerous weekdays. It is also a focal point for the village and at the annual patronal festival in July it is possible to climb the tower stairs.

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