

Wanborough Church Information

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The Building

The church occupies a commanding position at Upper Wanborough.

It is built largely of local chalk-stone and consists of a chancel with a vestry to the north of it, an aisled nave, north and south porches, and a west tower.

It possesses some of the features of a cruciform plan, having an extra bay between nave and chancel, divided from both by transverse arches. Above this bay or 'crossing' rises a slender hexagonal tower with a stone spire. Flanking the crossing are small 'transepts', which are divided from the aisles by arches but do not project beyond their outer walls. The south transept contains an original piscina and is now used as a chapel with a modern dedication to St. Katherine. Above the crossing small additional arches to north and south help to provide a square support for the tower. Both tower and spire have windows on each face, giving light to the area below.

All this work dates from the 14th century when the rest of the nave, which is of four bays, was also rebuilt.

It is possible that the curious arrangement between nave and chancel perpetuates the plan of an earlier cruciform church. The only survivals from the earlier building are the Norman font and some re-used stones in the walls of the nave.

It has been suggested that the north doorway of the nave, with its elaborate 14th-century carving to arch and jambs, was brought from the former chapel of St. Katherine at Wanborough.

The chancel, the north porch, and the embattled west tower of three stages were built in the 15th century. A brass plate on the tower records that it was begun in 1435, mentioning Thomas Polton, his wife Edith, and others as benefactors.

Various legendary explanations have been given for the existence of two towers to the church, one at each end of the nave. It was not uncommon, however, for imposing west towers to be added to parish churches in the 15th century, largely in order to accommodate the number of bells then thought necessary.

At some period after the west tower was in existence the nave roof was given a lower pitch; it may have been at this time that a shallow clerestory was added. The clerestory no longer contains windows although one window on the north side survived into the 19th century.

A restoration of the church was carried out in 1887 during which internal whitewash and plaster were removed, revealing 15th-century wall paintings; one of these, depicting the Entry into Jerusalem, has been preserved on the north wall of the nave.

Monuments in the church include a brass with figures of Thomas Polton and his wife Edith (both d. 1418) and a mural tablet with a long inscription which probably commemorates Anthony Hinton (d. 1598). (fn. 300) A tablet in the vestry is in memory of Thomas Gray (d. 1725). Housed in the south porch are two incomplete stone effigies of the 14th century.

A painted notice in the north porch requests all 'females' to take off their pattens on entering the church.

The Bells

In 1553, four bells and a sanctus bell were delivered to the king's commissioners.

In 1966, there were 6 bells and a sanctus bell. Three dated from the later 17th century, two from the 18th century, and one from 1950 when all the bells were recast or retuned. The sanctus bell dates from 1783.

St. Katherine Chapel

In 1270, A chapel dedicated to St. Katherine was founded by Emily Longespée (d. c. 1276), widow of Stephen Longespée, lord of the manor. The chapel stood within Emily Longespée's court, and a chamber and wardrobe for the priests and for the chapel ornaments were built nearby 'in her courtyard near the marsh on the south side of the granary.' (Access to the chapel in 1292 was by a gate between the 'great fishpond' and the boundary of the warden's property - it seems likely, therefore, that the chapel was situated on the moated site at Cold Court at the Marsh, more than a mile north-west of the parish church.)

She endowed it with a small estate to support two chaplains and a clerk who were to say matins and vespers and celebrate mass daily. The senior chaplain was apparently appointed for life and was called warden, the other was said to be 'elected'. Further small grants followed, including some land for extensions to the chapel.

In 1280, when more land was granted, another priest was added who was to spend 1 mark each year upon clothing the poor and was to distribute 20s. in alms.

In 1329, more property was granted by Robert of Wanborough for the maintenance of another chaplain. At the time of Robert's death in c. 1334 there seem to have been proposals to use some of the land for a new foundation to support two chaplains either in the parish church or in St. Katherine's chapel. Nothing more is heard of these proposals and in 1336 the chapel's endowments were maintaining two chaplains and a warden following the rules of the original foundation.

The advowson of the chapel descended from the founder to successive lords of the manor of Wanborough, although in 1361 the Bishop of Salisbury presented.

In 1483 Francis, Viscount Lovel, sold the chapel and its estate to William Waynflete, Bishop of Winchester.

Offerings were still made there in 1535, but the chapel was otherwise little used and was probably demolished in 1549.