

Welcome to the Church of St. Nicholas Cuddington



A guide and brief history
of our living church

Welcome! Our church has stood in the centre of the village for over 800 years as a reminder of the existence of God and His desire to be at the centre of all our lives and activities.

This booklet tells something of the way the church has been built, extended and adapted over the years from the thirteenth to the twenty-first century. Throughout these centuries people from Cuddington and district have come here to worship Almighty God and to seek to get to know him better through Jesus Christ. Because of this there is a sense of God's peace here which we hope you experience.

Details of our Sunday services can be found in the porch, and we would be delighted if you could come to join us.

Medieval Heritage

There has been a church on this site since at least the late 11th century and there are records of incumbents from 1086 (see board in the south aisle). The first church probably consisted of a chancel and an aisleless nave, much shorter than the present one. Nothing remains of that building, however, and much of today's church was constructed in no fewer than four stages.

The 13th and 14th Centuries

In 1220 the present chancel and chancel arch and the first arch and a small transept on the north side of the church were built. In 1230 a short narrow aisle of two bays was constructed in the south wall. In 1260 the north aisle was added with an arcade of three bays and at the same time the south aisle was lengthened by two bays to the west. In 1290 the south aisle was widened to form a south chapel and the north aisle was also widened to its present size. The small arch at the west of the south chapel was built in the 13th century.

There is only one octagonal pillar in the church, one half of it dating from the construction of 1220 and the other from that of 1260. The other pillars are all round and also of 13th century origin. The design of the fluted and scalloped collar of the pillar on the north side was probably copied by a stonemason in the 14th century from the original version on the first column on the south side, which dates from the 13th century.

The font dates from the early 13th century or even late 12th century. It is a good example of an Early English circular stone font with a fine oak and iron bound lid. It was originally placed near the north door and had a wooden lid in the shape of a pyramid, which was raised by counter-balanced pulleys.

The south porch was added in this period. The outer archway of the porch was restored at a later date using some 14th century stones. The doorway in the north wall also dates from this period, as does the small piscina with drain in the present memorial chapel.

The 15th-17th Centuries

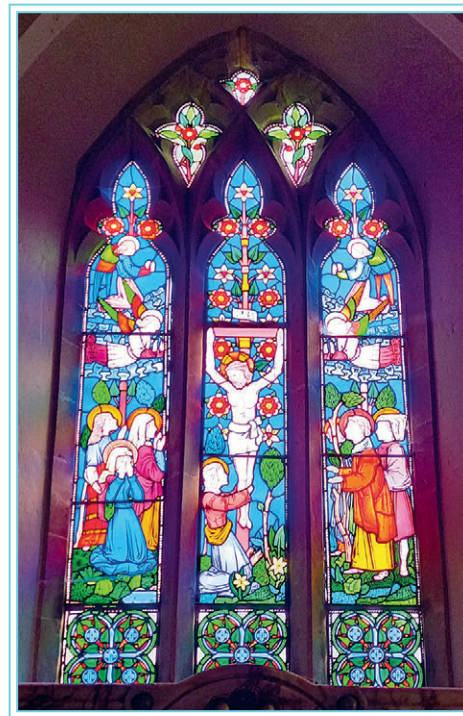
In the 15th century the archway at the west end of the church was constructed and the tower with the west window was added. The north aisle was shortened to its present length at some time, probably in the 17th century.

On the west wall of the south aisle is a board giving details of a charity dating from 1645 which still benefits young people in the village.

The Windows

The east window and that at the south-western end of the chancel date from the 14th century, the other two windows in the chancel and sanctuary being 15th century work.

The stained glass in these windows is Victorian. The east window of the memorial chapel is of 13th century origin, the two stained glass depictions of angels being of 14th century glass. The interior stonework of the two side windows in the chapel dates from the 13th century, but the exterior stonework is of the 15th century. The window at the western end of the south aisle has a 14th century interior, but the exterior stonework is Victorian. The two windows at the eastern end of the north aisle were built in the 14th century and those at the western end are 16th century.

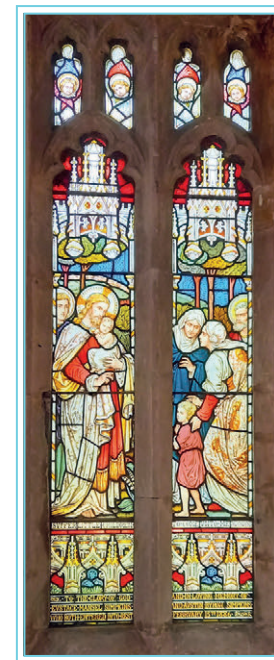


The east window of the Chancel.

The Crucifixion with Mary Magdalene.

Designed by George Edmund Street of James Powell & Sons.

1857.



The north window of the Chancel.

"Suffer the little children to come unto me".

1886.



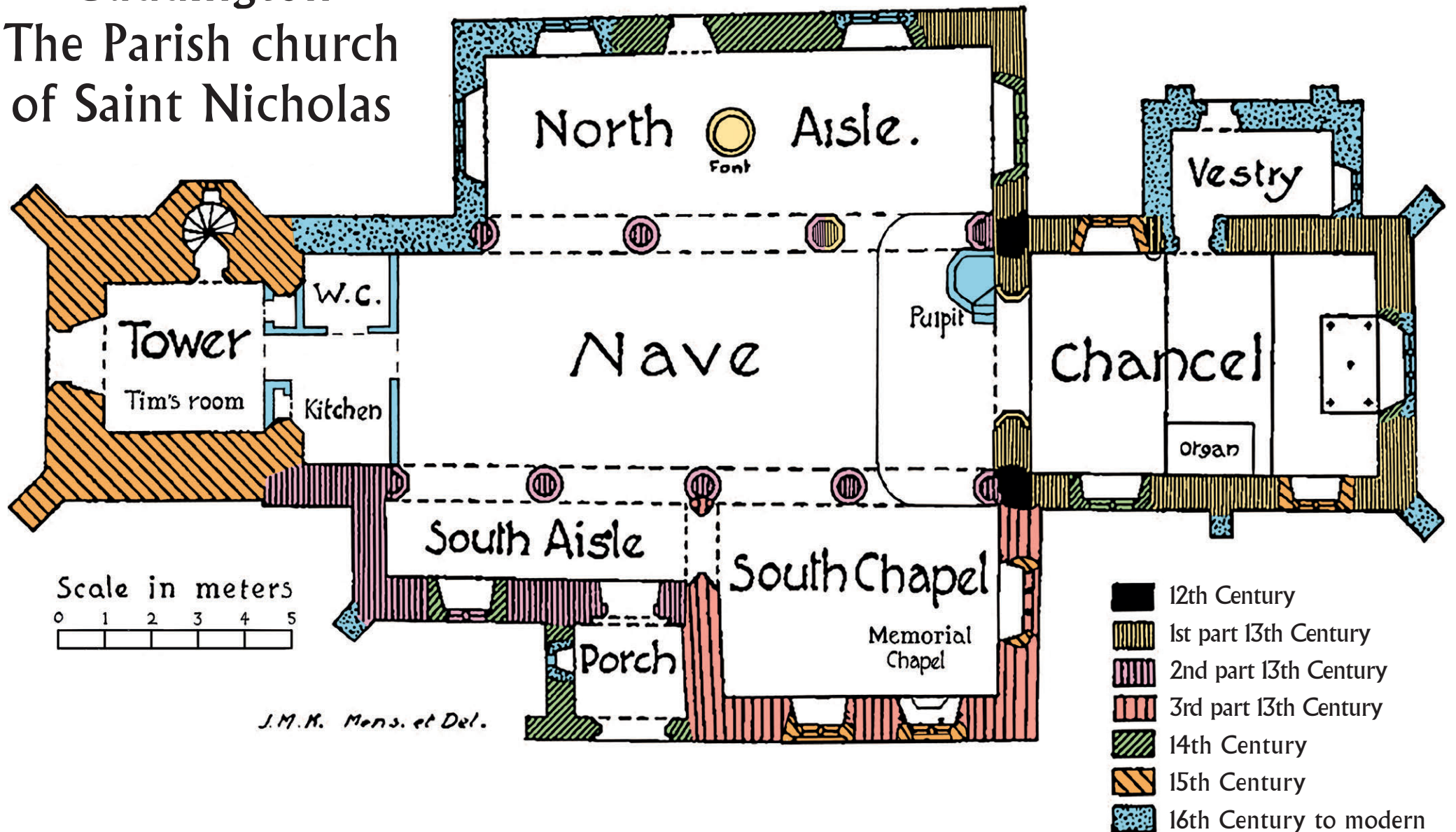
The west window of the North Aisle.

Two angels.

1966. Added from Wells Cathedral in 1996.

Cuddington

The Parish church of Saint Nicholas





The south east window of the Chancel.

The Resurrection and Ascension.
Joseph lifted from the pit.
Elijah and the chariot of fire.

By Clayton & Bell.

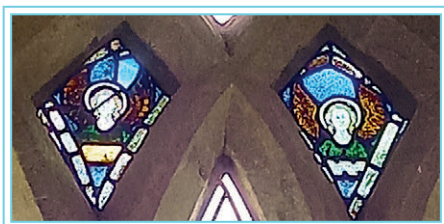
1863.



The south west window of the Chancel.

An angel appears before the shepherds.

1891.



The east window of the South Chapel
(Memorial Chapel).

Two angels.

Surviving fragments of 14th century glass.

Victorian Heritage

Pews had been introduced in 1828 to replace benches and stools. Some of the 19th century pews remain in the Memorial Chapel.

In 1857 the church was extensively renovated and restored. George Edmund Street, a well known and respected architect of that time, whose work includes the Law Courts in the Strand in London, was responsible for this work. Much of this restoration can still be seen in the chancel.

Tiles were laid in the nave, as were the present decorative tiles on the floor of the chancel extending into the sanctuary. Unfortunately, the tiles cover a number of stone slabs and memorial tablets dating variously from the 17th and 18th centuries, and two vaults from the 18th and early 19th centuries in the north aisle were also covered over at this time.

The glass of the east window was designed by Street as was the reredos, which is made from marble and alabaster. Both are regarded as particularly fine examples of his work.

The Gray & Davison single manual pipe organ was installed and the vestry was built on to the church at this time.

The small window in the south porch was also added although the niche dates from the 14th century.

The roof was removed and the present one constructed. The beams are of stained deal.

The wooden pulpit was replaced by the present one of Caen stone and a wooden rood screen removed together with a painting of the Royal Coat of Arms of Queen Anne, dated 1706, from the wall above the chancel arch. A gallery at the west end of the church was also removed. The font was moved from near the north door to a position near the south door.

More recent changes

After the 1914-18 war the east end of the south aisle was turned into a memorial chapel. The carved wood panelling is thought to be part of a communion table and, together with the Jacobean communion rail, probably came from nearby Nether Winchendon House.

Set into the floor at the east of this chapel are some medieval patterned tiles which were moved from the tower area in 1996. These were almost certainly made in the 14th century in Buckinghamshire, possibly in Penn.

The platform at the east end of the nave was constructed in 1993 to facilitate greater flexibility in worship. In 2005 the Victorian organ in the chancel was fully refurbished. To complement this instrument an electronic organ was installed in the nave in 1993 and this was replaced in 2003 by the present Clavinova.

The area underneath the tower, The Tim Hilder Room, known as 'Tim's Room', was rebuilt in 1996. It provides a meeting room and small kitchen area, together with a toilet with facilities for the disabled. The work was funded by the family and friends of Tim Hilder.

In 2009 an extensive refurbishment was undertaken. As well as general cleaning, painting and repair work the whole of the nave, the north and south aisles and the porch were re-floored with stone slabs, in keeping with the church's medieval heritage. To provide easy disabled access a platform, level with the porch floor, with slopes running down East/West, was added and the font was returned to its original position near the north door. Oak benches and oak chairs with upholstered seats were purchased for use in the nave and north aisle. The poppy head carvings and some of the wood from the Victorian pew frontals were incorporated into four new bookcases.

Finally, a new heating system was installed, and the church was rewired and fitted with modern lighting and audio/visual systems.

Bells

The church has a peal of eight bells, six of which were cast by John Warner and Sons of London and dedicated in October 1884. These replaced bells hung in 1610-12, which in turn replaced the four earlier bells. A bell ringing floor was added in the tower in the 1980's. In 1999 an additional two bells were cast by Whitechapel Bell Foundry and hung by Whites of Appleton Church Bellhangers thus completing the octave peal. In 2003, the 7th and tenor bells, which had been underweight, were recast at Whitechapel.





This Brief History was compiled by members of the church using material from Histories of Buckinghamshire and research by the Venerable Dr. W.A. Strange MA, who at one time lived in Cuddington. The updated plan of the Church is reproduced with the kind permission of Victoria County History and the Institute of Historical Research.