St. Peter's, Titchfield

A GUIDE TO THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH AND PARISH

Price: £3.00

The Parish Church of St. Peter's Titchfield, Fareham

(Third Edition 2017)

PREFACE

This guide was first published in 1974, but has been amended over the years to incorporate the results of further study, particularly into the Anglo-Saxon origins of Titchfield church. I am grateful to the many people who have assisted in these studies, and to all those whom I have received help in the preparation of this guide.

The first edition of this guide book will be found in the Hampshire Record Office.

MICHAEL HARE.
September 2016

Photographs by Ross Underwood

ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY OF THE PARISH

The market-town of Titchfield stands on the west bank of the River Meon. The river and a canal flow past the churchyard and make their way placidly to the Solent, some two miles to the south. However, to understand the history of Titchfield it is important to realise that for many centuries it was a port at the head of the estuary. It was not until 16II that a bank was built at the mouth of the Meon, and the estuary drained.

ANGLO-SAXON PERIOD

In the fifth and sixth centuries A.D., the south-eastern part of Hampshire was settled by a Jutish tribe called the Meonware, who took their name from the River Meon. The circumstances in which the Meonware became Christian are unknown, but it seems likely that they were converted sometime between 648, when a church was founded at Winchester, and 686, when the Isle of Wight was evangelised. In the seventh and eighth centuries, the province of the Meonware was a part of the kingdom of Wessex, except for a short period from 661 to 686 when it was annexed to the kingdom of Sussex. Sussex was converted between 681 and 686 by the great Northumbrian prelate St. Wilfrid and his campaign may well have extended to include the Meonware. Certainly, the Meon Valley was within his sphere at the time. This fact will be of interest later when we come to examine the earliest parts of Titchfield church, which display features characteristic of the early churches in Northumbria.

In Anglo-Saxon times, Titchfield was with little doubt a 'minster' church, an establishment responsible for the pastoral care of a wide area. There is no surviving reference to Titchfield in the early part of the Anglo-Saxon period, but a charter of King AEthelred dated 982 refers to the members of a religious establishment here. The architectural evidence also indicates an important church in Anglo-Saxon times. The importance of the church in this period was reflected in the size of the parish down to comparatively recent times. Until the 19th century the parish covered an area of about $24_1/_2$ square miles, stretching some seven miles along the foreshore of the Solent and about five miles up the Meon Valley. Originally it also included Wickham and probably much of Fareham.

THE NORMANS

We do not know the fate of the establishment which existed at Titchfield in the tenth century. In view of the size of the parish it is not likely that it was served by a single priest in the Norman period. What we do know is that there were several subordinate chapels in the outlying parts of the parish to assist in the work of the clergy. One such chapel was at Wickham, four miles further up the Meon Valley. In the twelfth century Wickham was granted the status of a separate parish by Bishop Henry de Blois (1129-71). Other chapels were at Crofton (first mentioned in the Doomsday Book in 1086) and at Chark, both in the south-eastern portion of the parish.

In l23l Peter des Roches, Bishop of Winchester, chose Titchfield as the site of the Premonstratensian monastery which he intended to found. The monastery was sited about half a mile to the north of the town. Peter gave to the monastery the church of Titchfield together with its chapels and substantial income. As a general rule, medieval monasteries were not concerned with pastoral work in the surrounding areas, but Premonstratensians were the principal exception to this rule. In 1283 the canons of Titchfield were given the right of nominating one of their own body as vicar, and from this time up to the Dissolution of the monasteries the vicars of Titchfield were canons of the Abbey. Several of the vicars became abbots of the monastery.

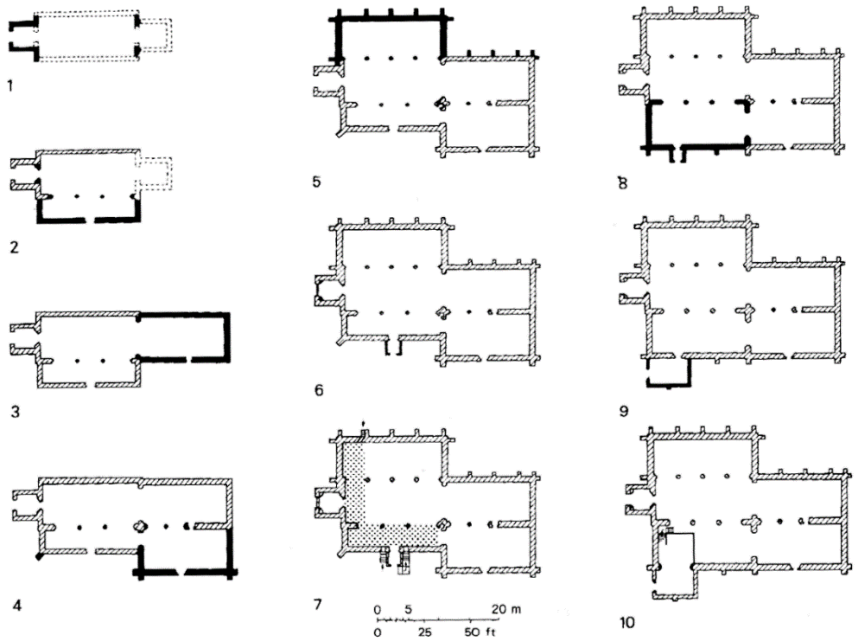
THE DISSOLUTION

At the dissolution in 1537, Titchfield Abbey was granted by Henry VIII to a subordinate of Thomas Cromwell called Thomas Wriothesley, who was later created Earl of Southampton. With the monastery, he acquired the patronage of Titchfield church and the chapel on the south side of the chancel. This chapel was converted into a mausoleum for the Earls of Southampton and the result is the magnificent Wriothesley monument which now occupies this part of the church.

From the dissolution to the nineteenth century, the huge area of the parish of Titchfield was served by a single vicar, sometimes assisted by a curate. Finally, in the nineteenth century, the vastly increased population of the outlying parts of the parish made new arrangements necessary. Between 1837 and 1933 the parish of Titchfield was divided into six separate parishes, the following new parishes being created: Sarisbury with Swanwick (1837), Crofton (1871), Hook with Warsash (1872), Lock's Heath (1893) and Lee-on-the-Solent (1930). The old mother parish is still the largest in extent, covering an area of about $7_1/_2$ square miles.

POST WAR PERIOD

There has been much modern development throughout the ancient parish of Titchfield. The post-war period has seen the construction of much new housing, particularly in the western and south-eastern parts of the ancient parish. Modern industry too makes its presence felt, most strikingly in the huge EATON works about a mile to the north-west of the town. But fortunately, all this modern development has not encroached to any great extent on the Meon Valley itself. The valley remains an oasis of calm between the eastward spread of Southampton and the westward spread of Fareham and Gosport.



Solid Line: New at each phase
Hatched Line: Retained from previous phase
Dashed Line: Conjectural

Evolution of St Peter's Church, Titchfield

1 Anglo-Saxon (probably late 7th century)
2 Norman (1160 - 1190)
3 Early English (13th century)
4 Decorated (1300 - 1350)
5 Perpendicular (15th century)
6 17th Century (probably about 1670)
7 Georgian (insertion of galleries in the shaded area between 1776 and 1801)
8 Victorian (1866 - 1867)
9 Edwardian (1905)
10 Present church with Chapter Rooms built in 1989

HISTORY OF THE CHURCH

As it stands today, Titchfield church consists of a western tower; a nave with north and south aisles; and a chancel with a chapel on its south side. The church as we see it was not built at one single period; it evolved slowly over the centuries. It does in fact contain work of all the main periods from Anglo-Saxon to Perpendicular. Please see the series of plans showing the evolution of the church overleaf.

EARLY NAVE AND CHANCEL

The Anglo-Saxon parts of the church are of very great antiquity, dating from the late seventh or the eighth century. From this period is preserved the lower part of the tower, which was originally a porch. The nave, which was originally aisleless, stood on the site of the present nave; the east wall of the Anglo-Saxon nave survives above the present chancel-arch which is a later insertion.

The original chancel was narrower than the present chancel; its length is uncertain but it was undoubtedly much shorter than the existing chancel. The Anglo-Saxon church probably had small side-chapels, but all traces of such chapels have now been lost.

AISLES, TOWER AND SPIRE

In the Middle Ages Titchfield was a thriving market-town and port, as well as the centre of a large parish. From the thirteenth century, the church was in the patronage of a powerful monastery. The size of the church reflects these factors.

The first alterations to the Angle-Saxon church seem to have taken place in the second half of the twelfth century. An aisle was thrown out on the south side of the nave and the elaborate doorway opening from the porch to the nave was inserted.

Towards the end of the same century or in the thirteenth century the porch was raised to form a tower. In the thirteenth century, the chancel was lengthened to its present size, and in the first half of the fourteenth century a chapel was built on the south side of the chancel.

The fifteenth century saw further changes. A fine aisle was added on the north side of the nave (possibly replacing an earlier aisle in the same position) and the chancel was extensively remodeled. It was probably during this century that the spire was added to the west tower.

MEDIEVAL INTERIOR

It requires a considerable effort of imagination to visualise the interior of the church as it was at the end of the medieval period. For one thing, we must imagine its colourfulness; we must restore in our minds the medieval stained glass in the windows, the murals on the blank spaces of walling, the altars with their

rich hangings and their reredoses, the painted statues and the like.

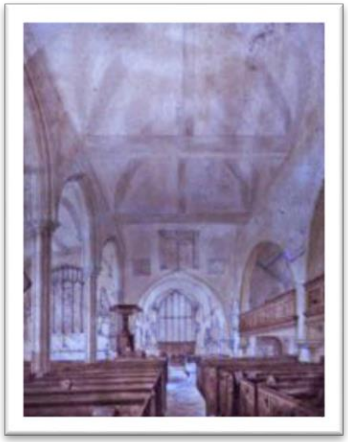
The church must have had several altars, three at the very least; one in the chancel, one in the south chapel and one in the north aisle. There were probably also altars in the south aisle and in the nave on either side of the chancel-arch. The altars in the north aisle and in the chancel, backed by large windows filled with stained glass and tiers of niches with painted statues, must have been particularly magnificent.

We must also realise that the church would have been strictly compart-mentalised. The south chapel was probably almost entirely cut off from the rest of the church, and the nave would be divided from the chancel by the rood screen, through which what took place at the altar could be only partially glimpsed. The altars at the ends of the aisle were probably also surrounded by screens. The congregation would be confined to the nave itself and would see and hear little of the offices in the chancel, except at the elevation of the Host.

POST REFORMATION FURNISHINGS

The Reformation bought drastic changes. The decorative and devotional art in the form of statues, paintings and stain glass was swept away, along with much of the screen work. The minister now conducted most services in the Nave and the Nave and aisles were adapted so that the congregation could hear and participate in a very different kind of worship centred on the reading desk and pulpit.

Some idea of the effect can be obtained from a painting formerly in the exhibition in the Southampton Chapel which showed the church before the further changes of the mid-nineteenth century. Colour was almost entirely lacking. The windows were plain and the walls whitewashed. The focal point of the church was a splendid Georgian three-decker pulpit which, with the font, dominates the nave. The Communion Table at the far end of the chancel was in no way emphasized. Above the pulpit, in the position over the chancel-arch, where originally there was doubtless a medieval painting of the Last Judgement, hung the Ten Commandments (1728), "the appeal to morality taking the place of the threat of "Hell Fire". The various furnishings seen in the painting were nearly all of seventeenth and eighteenth century date. In the north aisle, there was a hatchment (i.e. a memorial coat of arms).



Accommodation was often a problem in the eighteenth century, not usually for reasons of size, but because so much of the seating was reserved for the upper and middle classes. One common solution was to build galleries, and at Titchfield the south aisle was filled with galleries between 1776 and 1801. There was also the customary ‘singers' gallery at the west end of the nave.

VICTORIAN RESTORATION

The Victorians disapproved of these galleries on both liturgical and aesthetic grounds. When the church came to be restored in 1866-7, the galleries were destroyed along with the whole of the south aisle and arcade. The aisle and arcade were rebuilt in fourteenth century Gothic style. The seventeenth and eighteenth century furnishings were removed, the church re-seated and choir stall provided for the singers formerly accommodated in the west gallery. The focus of the church once more became the chancel altar.

THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

A vestry was added in 1905 in the place of Victorian south porch. In 1989 the west end of the south aisle and the vestry were connected to form new Chapter Rooms. A meeting room and kitchen have been provided on the ground floor of the Chapter Rooms, with choir and priest's vestry above.

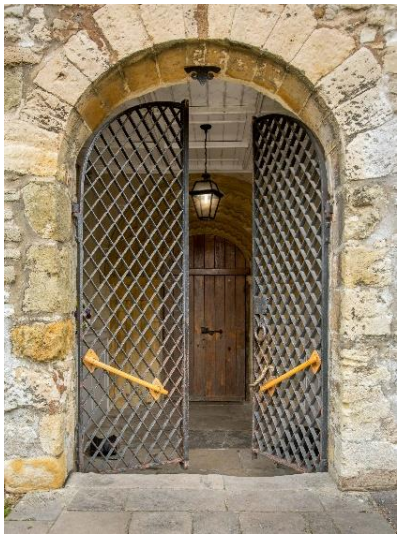
The upkeep of such a large and ancient church is a continuous problem. Heroic efforts have been made since 1950 to ensure the building is safe and secure. Today the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Friends of St Peter's have significantly contributed to maintaining this ancient structure. The work will continue so that, if possible, many generations to come will be able to find beauty and peace in Titchfield Church and will be moved to offer here their praise to God.

A TOUR OF THE CHURCH

Having briefly surveyed the development of the church, let us examine its separate parts in detail. First we shall look at the oldest part, the Anglo- Saxon porch, then returning inside we shall examine the interior, before making a short tour around the remainder of the outside of the church.

ANGLO-SAXON PORCH

Even the casual observer will quickly notice the contrast in fabric between the upper and lower parts of the west tower. The lower part of the tower is the old Anglo-Saxon porch and is built mainly of coursed limestone rubble, while the upper part of the tower is built of a mixture of cut flint and roughly dressed stone blocks. On the west side, it will be seen that the limestone rubble fabric continues to a rather higher level than in the side-walls. What we see here is in fact the lower part of the gable of the Anglo-Saxon porch. The apex of the gable was no doubt removed when the porch was turned into a tower to bed the upper storeys more firmly on the old work.



In the west wall of the tower is a plain round-headed arch. This is the original entrance-arch of the church. The head of the arch is still intact, and it will be seen that its stones pass right through the thickness of the wall, a characteristic Anglo-Saxon feature. Another Anglo-Saxon characteristic to be noted is the way in which the lowest stones of the arch are tilted up slightly at their bottom edge. Above the arch we should notice a row of re-used Roman tiles, three and in some places four tiles deep. During repairs to the church it was found that this course passed right through the thickness of the wall.

On the south side of the tower there is a gap in this tile bonding-course, and an area of disturbed masonry above and below this gap will be noticed. This appears to represent a doorway of uncertain date. It will also be seen that the bonding-course of tile continues across the west wall of the nave to its south-west angle. The preservation of this angle shows that the original Anglo-Saxon nave did not have aisles.

What we have seen so far enables us to re-construct the appearance of the original Anglo-Saxon west end. We have a tall porch with an open west archway. Behind this porch was the even higher west wall of the nave. One further element remains to be added to the picture. There was a round- headed window in the middle of the gable of the nave opening out above the roof of the porch. This window is now concealed by the upper storeys of the tower, but can be seen inside the church.

One very attractive feature of the porch is the variety of materials used in it. For instance, the head of the western archway of the porch is built of yellow limestone while green sandstone and Bembridge stone (a freshwater limestone) can be seen in the jambs. A similar variety of stones will be seen in the quoins (corner stones), which are built of large much-weathered stones bonding into alternate walls; particularly striking are the dark-brown blocks of ironstone. This considerable variety of material at once suggests that the church was not built with freshly-quarried stone but with materials re-used from earlier buildings, with little doubt Roman buildings. The presence of a considerable quantity of Roman tile in the fabric lends support to this suggestion. There were, in fact, several suitable Roman sites in the vicinity, including Portchester Castle, about five miles away.

In date this porch probably belongs to the late seventh or eighth century. It recalls several other porches of similar date, for instance the porch at the famous monastery of Monkwearmouth (Co Durham). The technical details also recall the early churches of Northumbria. This Northumbrian influence is of considerable interest when we recall that Titchfield was in the sphere of that great church-building prelate from Northumbria, St Wilfrid, between 681 and 686. There is no evidence to enable us to prove a connection with Wilfrid at Titchfield. However, the existence of an early church with Northumbrian features suggests that it was built by Wilfrid or under his influence and that it should be dated to the time of his mission (681-6) or to the succeeding generations. The use of a bonding-course of tile in the proper Roman manner is another feature suggestive of an early date. The influence of Roman craftsmanship is a characteristic feature of the earliest churches in England. (A full account of the Anglo-Saxon church will be found in vols. 32 and 47 of the Proceedings of the Hampshire Field Club and Archeological Society).

TOWER AND SPIRE

Let us return to our examination of the tower. In the late twelfth or in the thirteenth century the walls of the Anglo-Saxon porch were raised to form a tower. The upper part of the tower is of very plain character with lancet windows in each of its side-walls, the one in the west wall at a slightly higher level. Access to the upper part of the tower is obtained by a nineteenth century stairway built against its north wall. A doorway at the top of the stairway opens into the first floor.

The shingled broach-spire was probably built on top of the tower in the fifteenth century. The clock dates from 1887 and the weather-vane from 1913.

The construction first of the tower and then of the spire on top of the thin walls of the Saxon porch has given rise to continuous structural problems. For instance, in 1668 it is recorded that

"the said tower having been surveyed by three able workmen and according to their judgment given thereupon found to be in such a ruinous condition that it is very likely to fall if not sodainly taken downe".

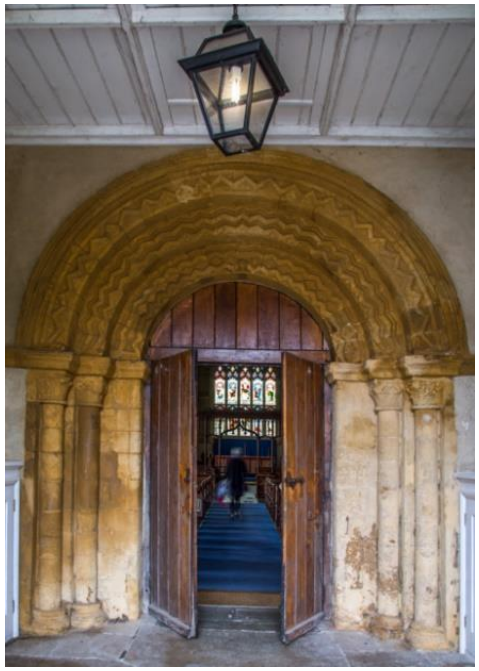
No action was taken and the question of demolition came to a head at a stormy meeting of the vestry in 1677 when it was decided to take no further action. It would be tempting to see

this as a seventeenth-century victory for “conservationists" but it is only too clear from the records that the only motive of those who wished to retain the tower was to avoid the expense involved in rebuilding it! At some date, perhaps at this time, the western archway was blocked and it remained blocked until l831. In 1850 extensive repairs were necessary and it was probably at this time that the iron tie which surrounds the tower at a height of 12ft. 6in was inserted. Many further repairs to the tower have been necessary in the last hundred years. In 1961 it was found that the spire did not rest securely on the walls of the tower; a concrete wall was therefore built around the inside of the top of the tower and the spire firmly fixed to this.

Having examined the tower, we can now enter the church.

NORMAN ARCH

As we enter the church let us notice firstly the splendid iron gates in the western archway, a gift in 1851 from the then vicar. The date can still be seen on the latch. Secondly we must look at the magnificent Norman arch which opens from the porch into the body of the church. This elaborate three-ordered arch dates from the second half of the twelfth century, and, with its zig- zag moulding and shafted jambs with foliated capitals, is typical of this period which so delighted in rich ornament.



THE NAVE

The nave preserves the dimensions of the Anglo-Saxon nave. The east and west walls are both Anglo-Saxon, the doorway at the west end and the chancel-arch at the east end being insertions into earlier masonry. The striking height of the nave is an original feature and is characteristic of Anglo-Saxon churches.

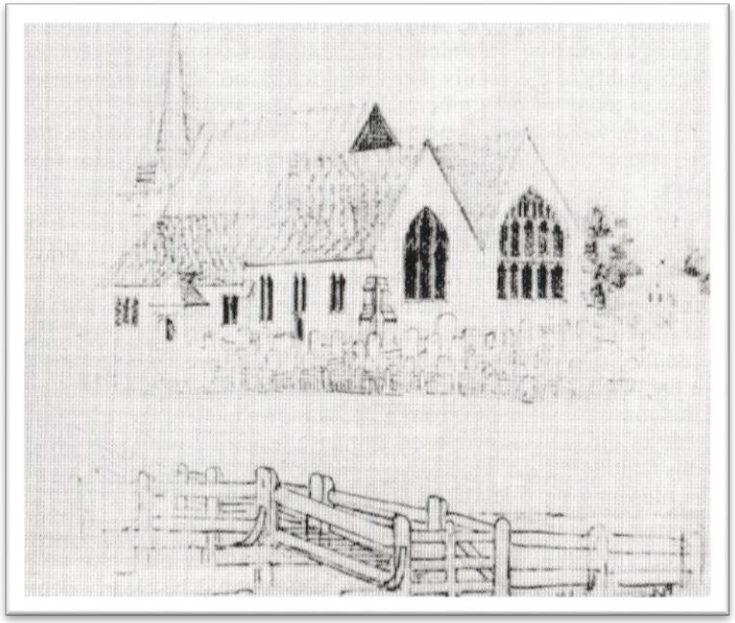
To visualise the original Anglo-Saxon church we must imagine solid walls in place of the present arcades. If we walk down the nave and look back at its west wall, we can see the early window in the gable of the nave, now opening into the upper storey of the tower. For many centuries this window was blocked, but in 1982 the blocking was removed to commemorate the l000th anniversary of the first written reference to Titchfield. The window is now revealed as a splendid example of Anglo-Saxon construction; both the head and the jambs of the window are built of massive stones passing through the full thickness of the wall.

The roof of the nave, of trussed rafter construction, is of later medieval date.

THE SOUTH AISLE

The medieval south aisle was pulled down during the 'restoration' of 1866-7. Fortunately, illustrations of the aisle before the restoration are preserved and enable us to form some idea of its appearance. A painting of the interior of the church hangs in the Southampton Chapel exhibition. This shows quite clearly that the aisle was of Norman date and had

an arcade of tall arches, either round or slightly pointed. There were round columns with scalloped capitals, fragments of which are still preserved in the Southampton Chapel. A drawing of the exterior of the church dating from about 1856 shows two square-headed windows on either side of a porch of uncertain date.



Titchfield Church from the South East about 1856 Reproduced from a pencil sketch in the Hampshire Record Office.

The south aisle was rebuilt in 1866-7 at the expense of the Hon. Misses Louisa and Emily Baring, daughters of Alexander Baring, first Baron Ashburton and head of the famous banking house. They employed a clergyman, the Rev. J. F. Turner of North Tidworth (later Bishop of Grafton and Armidale in New South Wales) as architect. Turner rebuilt the aisle in fourteenth-century style, but the result is unsuccessful and destroys the symmetry of the nave.

In 1989 the west end of the aisle and the vestry were converted to form new Chapter Rooms, consisting of meeting rooms and vestries on two floors. The architect was Kenneth Wiltshire.

THE NORTH AISLE

The spacious north aisle is much more satisfying in design. It dates from the fifteenth century, and is an unusually splendid example of the architecture of this period in this part of England. The arcade has slender piers with tall bases and with the characteristic section of four shafts and four hollows. The tall arches open up the whole of the north aisle to the nave. There are four large three-light windows in the north wall and one in the west wall, all of the same design.

The east window has five lights under a segmental head and is flanked by elaborate canopied niches. The niches are mutilated but enough remains to show the high quality of the details. The low-pitched roof is contemporary with the aisle, though many of the timbers had to be renewed in 1967. The whole aisle with its large windows, its slender piers and its delicate mouldings creates an effortless impression of spaciousness and light quite lacking from the rest of the church. Today the north aisle serves as a Lady Chapel.

THE CHANCEL

The date of the chancel-arch in its present form is uncertain, and it has probably been remodel led on more than one occasion. Research in 1983/4 showed that the arch was an insertion in an earlier wall. The removal of plaster from the east face of this wall revealed masonry of coursed limestone rubble identical to the Anglo-Saxon fabric at the west end of the church. Convincing proof that this masonry was of the same date was provided by the discovery on the south side of the course of re-used Roman

tiles which can be seen at the west end; this feature must originally have passed right around the Anglo-Saxon church. The tiles have been left exposed.

The Anglo-Saxon chancel was much narrower than the present chancel, measuring 14ft in width. When the present chancel was built the original chancel, walls were torn away, leaving scars which could be clearly detected when the wall was examined in 1983/4. The walls of this early chancel were taller than the present chancel walls, measuring 23ft in height. The length of the early chancel and the form of its east end (square or absidal) remain uncertain, but it is likely to have been comparatively short compared to the existing chancel.

The present chancel was built in the thirteenth century, when the liturgical developments (including the elevation of the host) led to the construction of extended chancel. However, the thirteenth-century chancel was in turn extensively remodeled in the fifteenth century. The only internal features to date from the thirteenth century are the sedilia and the priest 's doorway (Figure 4) on the south side and the string-course around the north, east and part of the south walls. The priest's doorway was originally external. The sedilia and the carved heads just above them are unfortunately heavily restored.

In the fifteenth century, the present large windows were inserted. The re- modeling of the chancel is perhaps rather later than the building of the north aisle and the work is certainly not of the same quality. The mouldings are coarser and the general effect heavier. In the north wall, there are three windows of three lights and in the east, wall a window of five lights. The tracery of the east window dates from about 1850, the original tracery having been removed at some time prior to this date. The painting of the interior formerly in the Southampton Chapel showed plain mullions (perhaps of wood) with a transom.

As in the north aisle, the east window is flan ked by two niches with canopies on either side. It is clear that the original design of the chancel was not completely carried out, for the tops of the upper canopies are cut away to make space for rafters. The roof of the chancel is ancient, with trussed rafters and arched principals.

THE SOUTH CHAPEL

The south chapel (now called the Southampton Chapel) has undergone many vicissitudes. It was built in the first half of the fourteenth century. At the east end of the chapel is a monument to William de Pageham, who may have been associated with

Priest's Doorway and Sedilia

the construction of the chapel. The chapel is effectively a complete church equipped for the full rite, with its own sedilia and piscina of attractive fourteenth-century design. The chapel was largely shut off from the rest of the church. The large arch to the south aisle dates from the nineteenth century. The chapel communicates with the chancel by a doorway (in which the hinges for the original heavy door may still be seen) and a two-bay arcade resting on a dwarf wall. The arcade is an attractive piece of fourteenth-century design with its clustered shafts, foliage capitals and wave-moulded arches. The capital of the

central column, with lively beasts (two of them winged), is especially worthy of attention. The windows of the chapel are plain; the knobby foliage of the responds is characteristic of the period. The roof of the chapel is ancient, with trussed rafters and tie-beams.

At the Dissolution the chapel came into the hands of the Wriothesley family and became a mausoleum for the Earls of Southampton. At the end of the sixteenth-century the monument which now dominates the chapel was installed. We shall describe this monument later. Subsequent ages have found it difficult to integrate this part of the church with the rest of the building, and it has effectively remained as a mausoleum, with the additional function since the last century of an organ-chamber. In 1905 there was an attempt to restore this part of the church as a chapel, but it was soon found impractical and it was abandoned in favour of the north aisle as a subsidiary chapel. Advantage has now been taken of this space by mounting a permanent exhibition as part of the church's Heritage Centre which includes drawings, maps, plans, and photographs which illustrate the history and development of the parish and its church.

This completes our examination of the interior of the church. Before we look at the furnishings, the monuments and the stained-glass windows, let us have a look at the outside of the church.

THE EXTERIOR

We have already examined the tower, so let us pass immediately to the north side of the church. This presents an appearance entirely of the fifteenth century. We see a vista of large Perpendicular windows separated by well-proportioned buttresses. Passing on to the east end of the church we must look at the fine five-light east window, of fifteenth-century design but dating in its present form from the nineteenth century. We may also note some further evidence for the thirteenth-century date of the chancel. The south-east quoin of the chancel has been preserved intact and it is quite clear that the fourteenth century south chapel was built up against this quoin after the construction of the chancel.

The south chapel with its ogee-headed windows is of very plain character externally. Passing around it we come to the Victorian south aisle. Externally the contrast with the rest of the church is even more marked than internally. With its non-local stone and its harsh pointing, the aisle makes a poor comparison with the rest of the church. At the south-west angle of the aisle we should notice the vestry, which was built in 1905 and now forms part of the Chapter Rooms; the two dormer windows were built in 1989.

THE FURNISHINGS

The furnishings of the church are almost entirely modern:

WOODWORK - Much of the woodwork, including the pews in the nave and aisles and the stalls in the chancel, date from the restoration of 1866-7.

TILES - The encaustic tiles with which much of the church is floored also date from 1866-7.

KNEELERS - The colourful tapestry kneelers produced by parishioners and friends of St Peter's from 1988 onwards. A photographic record is kept at the back of the church.

ALABASTER STATUE - The Alabaster statue of the Virgin and Child was made by the sculptor Sven Berlin (died 1999) and installed in the church in 2008.

PULPIT - The oak pulpit with tester is by Potter and Hare (1963).

SCREEN - The chancel-arch screen (1916) was designed by Norman Atkins.

ALTAR RAILS - The chancel alter rails were made in 1961.

TABLE - The table in the south chapel, alongside the organ casing, was once part of the sounding-board of the old Georgian pulpit.

LECTERN - The brass eagle lectern dates from 1897.

CHEST - The chest in the south chapel is medieval (fourteenth or fifteenth century).

FONT - The octagonal font in the north arcade has alternate representational and symbolic carving in relief. It was made in 1951 by Charles Upton as a memorial to the many troops who passed through Titchfield on their way to take part i n the D-Day Normandy invasion of 1944.

ORGAN-The organ was built by Bevington of London in 1866 and was originally a two-manual organ without pecel stops. In 1934 it was fitted with a correct pedal-board with 16ft pedal stop by Messers Ivermey of Southampton.

THE PAINTINGS

In the nave are two large paintings, one on the west wall (a mural) and one on the east wall above the chancel-arch. The painting on the west wall represents the Miraculous Draught of Fishes and was originally executed in 1888 as a memorial to the Rev. W. M. Cosser, vicar from 1852 to 1887. It was repainted in 1951-2 by students from Portsmouth School of Art "in a style more medieval than the original". On the east wall of the nave above the chancel-arch is a painting by C. E. Kempe dating from 1889. It represents the Crucifixion with the Virgin and St. John and was presented by Harriet, Marchioness of Bath, as a memorial to her sister, Louisa Baring.

THE STAINED GLASS WINDOWS

The medieval stained glass at Titchfield has been destroyed, with the exception of some tiny fragments to be seen in the tracery of the windows of the north aisle. However, most of the windows have been fitted with stained glass during the last century. Nearly all this glass is of Victorian date, and though some of the windows are individually of attractive design, the total effect is unremarkable. Except for the easternmost of the

three windows on the north side of the chancel, which are by Weiles, all the Victorian stained glass is by Clayton and Bell.

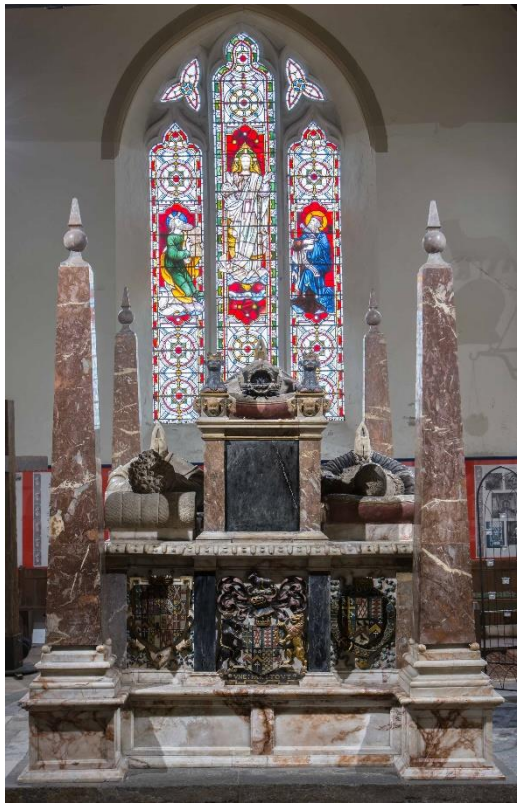
There is, however, one window with modern glass, a small panel by Francis Skeat in the west window of the north aisle which portrays a Titchfield farming scene. Note the strawberries!

A fine example of the work of Mr. Francis Skeat, the stained-glass window designer. This window is in the north aisle, and the words "O Jesus I have promised to serve thee to the end" point to the link between the life and work of the village and the worship offered in its church.

MEMORIAL TO WILLIAM DE PAGEHAM

The only surviving medieval memorial is a much-worn slab of Purbeck marble to the east of the Wriothesley monument. It bears the incised figure of a knight beneath a canopy; the armour and other details suggest a late thirteenth or early fourteenth-century date. There are two inscriptions round the edge, one in Latin and one in French. Both inscriptions are only partly legible, but the Latin inscription seems to consist of prayers while the French inscription identifies the knight as William de Pageham. There were unfortunately several members of the Pageham family called William, but one of these who is known to have local connections died in 1305 and is most probably the person commemorated. The monument is unique in England as part of it is executed in tailled 'epargne, a French technique in which the lies, rather than being incised, stand proud of the surface. A drawing in the exhibition shows what is still visible and the conjectured original appearance of the memorial.

THE WRIOTHESLEY MONUMENT



In the Southampton chapel is the magnificent Wriothesley monument to which we have already referred. In his will dated 1581 the second Earl of Southampton ordered "two faire monuments" to be set up in Titchfield church to consist of "portraitures of white alabaster, one for my Jorde my father and my ladye my mother, the other for mee". In fact, only this one monument with three effigies was made. The contract survives and is elated 1594; the sculptor was Gerard Johnson, a Flemish refugee.

A large vault was excavated in which were re-interred the bodies of the first Earl and Countess, originally buried in St. Andrew's, Holborn. The second, third and fourth Earls were also interred in the vault together with some other members of the family.

The monument itself is a raised rectangular tomb of two tiers built of marble and alabaster in the Renaissance manner. At the angles are projecting pilasters carrying tall obelisks. The central part of the tomb is raised above the rest and is carried on three round open arches. On it rests the effigy of Jane, Countess of Southampton (died 1574). The effigies of her husband, the first Earl (d. 1551) dressed in robes of State and wearing the Order of the Garter, and her son the second Earl (d. 1582) clad in an exquisite suit of plate armour, rest on the lower tier one either side, with heraldic beasts at their feet. At the feet are inscriptions on black marble panels. On the side panels are carved four alabaster figures kneeling before prie-dieus, the two on the south side representing the daughters of the first Earl and the two on the north being Henry the third Earl and his sister. The third Earl is famous as Shakespeare's patron.

For more information go to YouTube, Wriothesley Monument

After examining the monument we should also look at the mortuary helmet with bull crest which formed part of the funeral regalia of the second Earl, and which is hanging high up on the south wall of the chapel. Beneath is a fine monument to another member of the Wriothesley family, Lady Mary Wriothesley, fourth daughter of the third Earl, who died at the age of 4 in 1615. The monument is thought to have been made by Epiphanius Evesham. The recumbent figure is executed in white marble on a black marble base and surround and is dressed in adult clothes with a ruff. Above is a seated angel.

OTHER MONUMENTS

The matrix of an ancient brass may be noted in the pavement on the south side of the Southampton monument.

Among the later monuments in the church, the characteristic Jacobean monument in the north wall of the chancel, to William Chamberlaine (1608) of Beaulieu and his wife, is especially noteworthy. It represents William and his wife in white marble, each in a round-headed recess, kneeling at a common prie-dieu.Two sons and two daughters appear in bas relief in similar positions below. A Corinthian column on either side supports a flat cornice bearing the family coat of arms.

There are a considerable number of monuments of 17th, 18th and 19th century date in the chancel and south chapel, not all of

which can be mentioned here. It will be seen that a good number of monuments are to naval officers, colonial governors, soldiers and the like; with its proximity to Portsmouth, Titchfield has always attracted many members of the services in retirement. Among the better monuments are those to David Karr (1794) by Nollekens with a plain urn (north wall of the chancel) and that to Edward Ives (1786) by Cooke with a weeping willow and allegorical figure (south wall of the chancel). Of the nineteenth century monuments, perhaps the best is to John Hornby (1832) by Chantrey with a sleeping woman and urn (north wall of chapel).

Several tablets retain interesting or amusing inscription. On the north wall of the chancel is a monument to Gilbert Jackson (1779), vicar for almost 50 years, from which we learn that he died of gout (obiit podagra fractus). Nearby is a monument to Samuel Croppe, the Latin inscription of which may be translated to read, "Sam. Croppe, a medical man, skilled alike in experience and good results, By which he benefited nearly everybody except himself. Died October 29, 1710. Aged 35". On the south side of the chancel is a monument to Thomas Corderoy (1673), the donor of the communion plate. On the north wall of the south chapel there is a charming but pathetic lament composed by her husband in memory of Lucie Bromfeld who died in 1618, aged 30, having borne eleven children. On the floor of the chapel many ledger stones are to be seen.

The monuments in the nave and aisle are mostly modern. There were no monuments in the north aisle until the beginning of this century, and it is now reserved specially for war memorials, At the west end of the aisle a number of headstones mostly of 18th century date have been brought in from the churchyard and used as floor-slabs for better preservation. There are many more headstones of this date still in the churchyard.

THE BELLS

In 1896, the restoration of the bells was undertaken. The four bells then hanging in the tower were found to be in such a bad state that it was necessary to recast them all and the church decided to add two additional ones thus making a ring of six. The old wooden frame was beyond repair and a new iron frame was substituted.

In recasting the old bells, the original metal was used again and the original inscriptions and dates recast on the 3rd, 4th, 5th and Tenor. The ring of six bells is:

	cwt	qtr	lb	
TREBLE	5	I	27	
2nd	6	0	15	
3rd	6	3	22	- the old treble
4th	7	2	20	- the old 2nd
5th	8	3	13	- the old 3rd
TENOR	12	0	21	- the old tenor

Total weight: just over 47 cwt (2.4 tonnes)

The inscription on the 3rd (old treble) reads RICHARD BROWN - CHURCHWARDEN 1675 FF; the initials "FF" belonged to Francis Foster, bellfounder of Salisbury. The inscription on the 4th (old 2nd) reads IN GOD IS MY HOPE 1628 IC; the significance of "IC" is not known. The inscription on the 5th (old 3rd) reads AVE GRATIA PLENA (1275-1300). The tenor is inscribed R. WELLS OF ALDBOURNE, WILTS. FECIT

MDCCLXVIII. In addition, there is a small, un-inscribed bell which was mentioned in an inventory of 1552.

When the bells were recast in 1896 by Mears and Stainbank of Whitechapel, they were re-hung in an iron frame. In 1963 Taylors of Loughborough renewed the whole of the bell fittings including head-stocks, ironwork, wheels and clappers, pulleys, bearings and bell-ropes. One unusual feature is that the bells hang not in the tower itself, but in the lower part of the spire.

THE COMMUNION PLATE

There is a very fine silver-gilt set, consisting of two cups with cover patens, inscribed THE GIFT OF THO. CORDEROY GENT ANO DOM 1673. Also, given by Thos. Corderoy are two flagons of the same date and two alms dishes of 1670. In addition, there is a standing salver of 1679 given by William Orton.

This ancient plate is kept in the Treasury at Winchester Cathedral; a photograph forms part of the exhibition in the Southampton Chapel.

PARISH REGISTERS

The parish registers date from 1589 and the vestry minutes from 1672. They contain many entries of local and historical interest and are now preserved, with sundry other documents, in the Hampshire Record Office at Winchester, where they may be examined.

DEDICATION

The church is dedicated to St. Peter, and this dedication can be traced back at least as far as the fifteenth century. The dedication is of interest in view of the possible connection with St. Wilfrid, for St. Wilfrid is known to have dedicated nearly all the many churches which he founded either to St. Peter or to St. Andrew.

Too much stress should not be laid on this point, for dedications can readily change over a period of time.

TITCHFIELD AND ITS NEIGHBOURHOOD

A stroll around the streets of Titchfield will reveal many buildings of interest. Many of the houses have facades of Georgian brick, but there are also quite a number several half-timbered building s of older date. Visitors wishing to learn more about the village and its people are recommended to read “Village Voices” and various publications produced by the Titchfield History Society, available from Amazon, search Village Voices, Titchfield Spirit.

About half a mile to the north of the town are the remains of the Titchfield Abbey. The site is in the care of English Heritage and the surviving ruins are of considerable interest. They date predominantly from the thirteenth century when the Abbey was founded. In the sixteenth century following the dissolution of the monestries the Abbey was remodeled as a residence by the first Earl of Southampton, Thomas Wriothesley, and renamed Place House. An excellent guide-book is available.

First light