



THE CHURCHES
CONSERVATION TRUST



CHURCH OF ST BARTHOLOMEW

Richard's Castle,
Herefordshire



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CONSERVATION TRUST

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INTRODUCTION

Edward the Confessor, King of England 1042–66, was brought up in Normandy and is often described as more Norman than English. During his time in France he made many friends among the Norman nobility. When he became king he invited some of his favourites to England where they were given estates. Although almost all castles were built by the Normans in the years following the Conquest in 1066, Edward allowed just four to be built in the years before 1066. Three of these were in Herefordshire: at Hereford, Ewyas Harold in the Golden Valley and Richard's Castle (the fourth was at Clavering in Essex). The building of such private fortresses by 'foreigners' caused much resentment amongst the indigenous population, who united under Godwin, Earl of Wessex (he also held the earldom of Hereford), although he was sent into exile by the king in 1051. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle records in 1051 that these Norman foreigners caused much devastation in the areas where they had established themselves. But adequate defence of the Welsh border was becoming vital: in the 1050s attacks by the Welsh under their leader, Gruffyd ap Llewelyn, were becoming ever more frequent. Richard's Castle itself takes its name from Richard Fitz Scrob, one of King Edward's Norman nobles, who was given land to build his castle here, a place only some 9 miles (15 km) from the present border with Wales. Earl Godwin, who had been allowed to return, demanded from the king that the Normans surrender Richard's Castle but the king refused and Godwin was again exiled, though he returned in 1052.

*Front cover: Nave looking west
(Christopher Dalton)*

*Left: South aisle looking west. Note the
timber supports (Christopher Dalton)*





Exterior from the south-east (Christopher Dalton)

The CHURCH

HISTORY

The church was probably founded by Richard Fitz Scrob, builder of the castle, or his son Osbern, to serve the settlement that was growing up around the castle. The nave and chancel were built originally in the 12th century. Early in the 14th century the south aisle and its arcade were added; and, soon after, the upper part of the east wall and the chancel arch were rebuilt. At the same time the north chapel and the detached tower were built. In 1351 Robert de Hynton was appointed to the newly-founded chantry chapel of St John in the north transept. Later the chaplain acted also as schoolmaster to the grammar school in the parish. The enlargement of the church in the 14th century reflects the growth and prosperity of the borough that was developing around it. The south porch was added in the 15th century.

The church was restored in the 19th century with further work in 1935, principally to the main east and west windows. In 1890 a new church, dedicated to All Saints, was built a mile (1.5 km) north-east of St Bartholomew's and just over the county boundary in Shropshire. It was designed by R Norman Shaw for Mrs Hanna Jane Foster of Moor Park in memory of her husband, Johnston Foster. Although All Saints' was not intended as a replacement for St Bartholomew's, its somewhat more suitable location in the parish led to it becoming the main church for the village. The provision of an organ and heating in All Saints no doubt helped to sway the balance in favour of the new church.

Richard's Castle occupies a commanding position on high ground, overlooking the relatively flat country of South Shropshire and North Herefordshire, but with distant views of the hills beyond and of the Welsh Marches behind the trees. The castle affords good protection of the principal north-south routes and also of the road towards Worcestershire. Little now remains of Fitz Scrob's castle except for the large motte or mound with its bailey or embanked enclosure. Parts of a large octagonal stone tower and a gatehouse, added in the 12th century, are still visible, as are sections of a wall (the 'curtain') providing access between the outer towers and another large tower on the eastern wall built in the 13th century. Later in the 13th century the curtain wall was enlarged in places and the north-west stretch rebuilt and furnished with semicircular towers. In the Domesday Book (compiled in 1086) the castle is called *Avreton* or *Aureton* – part of the present-day parish, which probably once included the castle, is called Overton. The ancient name of the village that grew up around the castle was *Boiton* or *Boitanc*, (probably 'the settlement in the wood') though

in due course the influence of the castle led to the village itself being named from the castle.

After the Norman Conquest, King William gave the Earldom of Hereford to his closest friend, William Fitz Osbern, who quickly fortified the whole area between Chepstow and Shrewsbury by a line of castles, in order to defend the Welsh border. Richard's Castle passed through descendants of Fitz Osbern to the Cornwalls and the Talbots – the latter continued to live at Richard's Castle till 1376. In the later Middle Ages the castle was little more than a farmyard: a dovecote was inserted into one of the towers on the wall and farm buildings constructed in the ditch at the south end of the castle. By the time of John Leland's visit in about 1540 'the keep, walls and towers of it yet stand, but going to ruin'. And there was a 'poor house of timber in the Castle garth for a farmer'.

In 1216 King John granted a charter for a fair and market. Hugh de Mortimer, who succeeded to the lordship in 1287, granted rights of common in June 1301, some of which are still exercised. By 1300 Richard's Castle was a small

town with 103 land holdings or burgages, though a century or so later the settlement had dwindled to two farms and a few cottages. The outlines of this failed borough survive as a series of earthworks; the market place was probably the level area below the church now used as a car park for visitors to church and castle.

In 1537 Richard's Castle became vested in the Sovereign, Henry VIII, who granted it in 1545–46 to the Earl of Warwick, grandfather of Lady Jane Grey. Subsequently it was leased to William Heath, Richard Cornwall and John Bradshaw – the latter upon his marriage to Mary, daughter of Arthur Salwey of Stanford, Worcestershire. This is the first record of the manor's association with the old family of Salwey, who are still its possessors and who have held it uninterruptedly for well over four centuries. On 20 September 1648 William Bradshaw gave a deed of mortgage for £1040 on the property to his relative Major Richard Salwey, the Parliamentarian and in 1652 the Major purchased the residue of the 200-year lease from Bradshaw for £5000. Richard Salwey, though a Parliamentarian, was said not to have approved of the king's execution. Once when alone with Oliver Cromwell he drew his sword on him and threatened that Cromwell would not leave the room alive unless he promised to spare the king's life.

EXTERIOR

In the 1970s it became clear that the small parish of Richard's Castle was unable to continue maintaining two quite large churches. After much debate, it was decided that All Saints should be the parish church and that St Bartholomew's be declared redundant. English Heritage recognised that St Bartholomew's was a building of exceptional importance and a large amount of money was spent on several programmes of repair. At one point there appeared a possibility that English Heritage might take over responsibility for the church but eventually, in March 2001, it was vested in The Churches Conservation Trust. Under the Trust's aegis, further repairs have been carried out by the old-established firm of Treasure & Son of Ludlow, including work to external masonry, windows, pews and timber floors and drainage systems.

St Bartholomew's consists of a chancel, nave, south aisle and north chapel, a south porch and a detached tower to the east of the chancel. The walls are of local sandstone rubble and the roofs of tiles, stone and slates. The Norman church probably consisted of a nave of similar size to the present one, with an apsidal or square-ended chancel beyond. The earliest part of the present structure is the north wall of the nave with its two small, round-headed 12th-century windows. The chancel is probably also 12th-century, although much altered in the 14th century. To the east of the priest's door in the south wall of the chancel may be seen a blocked doorway and window, formerly opening into a crypt or chamber below the sanctuary. This crypt is known as St Anthony's Bower and may have been a hermit's cell, named after St Anthony, a 4th-century hermit, although there is no record of a hermit having lived here. Certainly since the 16th century the crypt has been used as a burial vault for the Salwey family; however its plastered and limewashed interior does indicate that it may once have had a more domestic function.

The west wall of the nave contains a large window of four lights, probably late 14th-century though much restored. The south aisle was built between 1310 and 1320 and contained the chantry of St Mary the Virgin, no doubt built by Joan de Mortimer who, with her sister, had inherited Richard's Castle in 1364. The east window of the aisle is of three cinquefoil lights

with tracery. The jambs and mullions have ball-flower ornaments, very similar in style to St Laurence's Church, Ludlow; indeed identical masons' marks indicate that the same team of masons were working at both churches. A smaller round window in the east gable may be a 19th-century insertion. There are windows in each of the bays in the south wall; the west window is of two lancet lights. The south doorway has moulded jambs. The south porch was added to the west bay of the south aisle in

the early 15th century. It has an outer archway and in its side walls are two-light windows under square heads.

The north transept or chapel is known as the Chapel of St John; local tradition has it that it was a chantry chapel for the Knights Templar, who had a house at Dinmore, south of Leominster. It was probably consecrated in 1351 by Bishop John de Trillek when Robert de Hynton was appointed chaplain. The west wall contains a



INTERIOR

three-light window within a rectangular head and the north wall a large four-light window, possibly inserted or replaced in the 17th century. The masonry was much renewed in the 20th century.

The square tower is one of seven detached towers in Herefordshire. It was built in the late 13th or early 14th century. Its unusual position some 17ft (5m) east of the chancel (most stand south of their churches) would have been dictated partly by the slope of the ground but was also undoubtedly chosen for military reasons. All the openings in the tower wall face north, south or east; the only opening in the west wall is the door. Thus its outlook covers areas the castle itself did not. The tower was formerly said to have been surmounted by a wooden spire, burnt down about 1800. It now has a pyramidal slated roof capped with a gilded weathervane. Inside the tower are three bells in an oak frame possibly of medieval date. The oldest bears the inscription *Santa Maria P[ro] Nobis*, an abbreviation for 'Holy Mary, pray for us'. It is undated but is likely to be early 16th century. The second bell is by Mears & Company of London, 1862. The third, originally an Abraham Rudhall bell of 1746, was recast by John Taylor of Loughborough in 1913 and bears the names of Roger Salwey and P. F. Hunter, Churchwardens, as well as Jeremiah Edwards, Churchwarden, 1747. As a project for the Millennium in 2000, the bells were checked and their fittings repaired. One was removed and a crack welded.

The church is entered through the south door. The first impression is of spaciousness and height and an interior virtually untouched by Victorian restoration.

The great majority of the furnishings were inserted in the 17th century, with the exception of the choir stalls in the chancel and the pews at the back of the nave. Indeed its appearance is of a little-changed 17th-century interior – a period when liturgical practices placed a greater emphasis on preaching with a corresponding demand for simple and plain furnishings. Indeed the pulpit and reading desk assumed greater importance than the altar and the sanctuary. Panels containing the Lord's Prayer, Ten Commandments and The Creed were placed prominently on either side of the altar and biblical texts were painted on the walls (indistinct remains survive on the south wall).

Some walls are plastered; others are bare stonework. The roofs are mostly exposed and consist of large tie beams, each bearing two queen posts with cross-braces and struts. Near the entrance is a large round bowl on a crude pedestal. Its original function is unknown – it is more like a large mortar than a font, though no font now exists in the church.

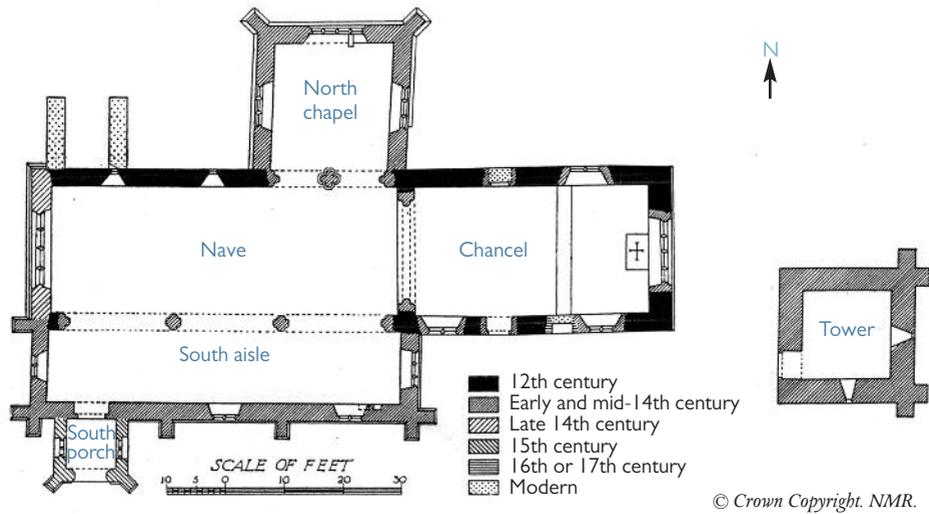
The nave and the south aisle are filled with box pews containing mid- and late 17th-century panelling. Most pews are numbered; one door on the south side is inscribed *S.H. 1688*. Towards the back of the church, the pews have been

replaced by early 19th-century open benches. At the west end of the nave is a low gallery for the church band or choir, with two rows of open benches and a balustraded front. In the north-east corner is the oak pulpit, hexagonal in shape. It is of a 'two-decker' arrangement, the pulpit above containing a seat for the preacher; the reading pew below with a bookrest for the clerk.

The south aisle has plastered walls and ceilings. It is divided from the nave by a three-bay arcade; note the ball-flower ornament on the piers.

The mortice holes above the capitals indicate that the whole of this aisle was partitioned off by a parclose screen, presumably to accommodate the chantry of St Mary. At the east end, in the south wall, is a piscina with a recess for an aumbry or cupboard alongside. Also in the east end is a fine early 17th-century oak communion table with a carved frieze. The south wall contains vestiges of 17th-century wall paintings in the shape of large roundels which may have framed texts from the Bible or Prayer Book.





Below left: View from nave to north chapel (Christopher Dalton)

Below: Low gallery at west end of nave (Christopher Dalton)

A most unusual feature is the three large timber supports with screw-threads, inserted probably in the same century to support the outward-leaning south wall. The technology of these large screws was probably suggested by those used on cider presses, once a familiar sight in the neighbourhood.

Near the north-east end of the nave a two-bay arcade opens into the north transept or Chapel

of St John. Mortice holes in the arcade show that this chapel was also screened off from the nave for the Knights Templars' chantry. It is devoid of pews except for the elaborate pew with panelled sides and door, the canopy supported on slender fluted columns. It dates from the late 17th century and was where the Salwey family sat during services. Behind is a large recess with moulded jambs, damaged by

the insertion of the pew and largely hidden by it. It was probably constructed for the tomb of the founder of the chapel, Hugh Mortimer, though there are no signs that it was ever actually used.

The chancel arch is similar in style to the arcade of the north transept; a series of mortice holes indicate the position of the former rood screen and loft. The roof of the chancel is 17th-century: tie beams cut across the line of the chancel arch and east window. The rafters are plastered over. The north wall contains a doorway, now blocked, which once led to a vestry, and opposite the

priest's door in the south wall. Almost above the blocked doorway is part of the jamb of a former window. A change in the masonry here and on the opposite wall suggests a lengthening or rebuilding of the chancel. The communion table with pillar legs is late 17th-century. The oak communion rails were originally three-sided but are now in a straight run with central gate and are c.1700. A note in the parish registers, undated but about 1715, states 'the money left by Mrs Hawks for the rails in the chancel did not hold out to finish the rails with the seats and the wainscote behind them ... so that



North wall of chancel showing hatchments and part of chancel arch (Christopher Dalton)

the wainscote behind the Table and down the steps was wholly at the charge of the Rector'. The choir stalls, also of oak, are mid-19th-century. The floor of the sanctuary is paved with Victorian glazed tiles.

There are a few fragments of medieval stained glass: in the east window of the north chapel are two figures which appear to depict the Coronation of the Virgin Mary. The west window in the chapel has a roundel with a

yellow flower. In the tracery of the east window of the south aisle is a crowned figure – Christ? – with borders of castles, fleur-de-lys etc, early 14th century. In the south window of the aisle is a roundel with part of a crowned head and other reassembled fragments. Dating from c.1300, it is the oldest piece of glass in the church. Much of the clear glass in the church is greenish handmade glass of the early 18th century. The east window of the chancel has four lights depicting *The Way of the Cross*, *The Crucifixion*,



Canopied pew of the Salwey family in north chapel (Christopher Dalton)



The Resurrection and *The Ascension*, each with scenes from the Old Testament below. The window is of 1861, given by Richard Betton of Overton House in memory of his wife; unsigned, it is almost certainly by William Wailes. The north chancel window shows *Christ Healing* and *The Ascension*. This may also be by Wailes and commemorates Henry Bridges who died in 1852.

The floors throughout the church are made from 42 decipherable ledger stones, some quite elaborate, and fragments of many more – several to the Salwey and Pritchett families. There are a number of wall monuments to local families, the most recent being one to Richard Salwey (d.1996) and his wife Marguerite Audrey (d.1997) at the entrance to the north chapel and carved by Belinda Eade of London. Leaning against the north wall in the north chapel is a large stone on which is carved the Salwey arms. This appears never to have been used for a monument but was, perhaps, intended to be. Against the west wall of the south aisle is a stone coffin lid with a foliated cross and probably late 13th century. There are seven hatchments in various parts of the church, mostly to members of the Salwey family, though that on the south chancel wall (west end) is to the Revd Robert Fitzwilliam Hallifax (d.1837). On the north wall of the chancel is a Benefactions Board recording the investing in 1902 of £101 4s. 1d for the upkeep of the church and churchyard. Two panels in the north chapel are painted with the

Lord's Prayer, Ten Commandments and Creed, and were probably originally placed on the east wall of the chancel. Under the gallery at the west end of the nave are several pieces of carved masonry and other stonework, most of which were found during excavations of the castle in 1962–64. Other fragments from work on the castle and church are stored in the tower.

The extensive churchyard continues to be the burial ground for the parish. Its stone walls enclose a variety of monuments, chest tombs and gravestones, those near the church being mainly 18th and 19th century. On a fine day there is a superb panoramic view of the rolling hills and lush countryside of South Shropshire, North Herefordshire and parts of Worcestershire and beyond.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The assistance of the Salwey family in compiling this guidebook is gratefully acknowledged.

Right: East window of the south aisle (Christopher Dalton)

Back cover: Fragments of medieval glass in east window of north chapel (Christopher Dalton)

Visitors are most welcome and we hope this guidebook will encourage you to explore these wonderful buildings.

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