



# ST ANDREW'S CHURCH

STEEPLE GIDDING  
CAMBRIDGESHIRE



THE CHURCHES CONSERVATION TRUST

LONDON

*Registered Charity No. 258612*

PRICE: £1.50





THE CHURCHES CONSERVATION  
TRUST WELCOMES YOU TO  
ST ANDREW'S CHURCH  
STEEPLE GIDDING  
CAMBRIDGESHIRE

*Many years ago Christians built and set apart this place for prayer. They made their church beautiful with their skill and craftsmanship. Here they have met for worship, for children to be baptised, for couples to be married and for the dead to be brought for burial. If you have time, enjoy the history, the peace and the holiness here. Please use the prayer card and, if you like it, you are welcome to take a folded copy with you.*

*Although services are no longer regularly held here, this church remains consecrated; inspiring, teaching and ministering through its beauty and atmosphere. It is one of more than 325 churches throughout England cared for by The Churches Conservation Trust. The Trust was created in 1969 and was, until 1994, known as the Redundant Churches Fund. Its object is to ensure that all these churches are kept in repair and cared for, in the interests of the Church and Nation, for present and future generations.*

*Please help us to care for this church. There is a box for donations or, if you prefer to send a gift, it will be gratefully received at the Trust's headquarters at 89 Fleet Street, London EC4Y 1DH until 30 September 2002. We will be moving to new offices in the autumn of 2002, so please look out for announcements in our churches or visit our website [www.visitchurches.org.uk](http://www.visitchurches.org.uk) for details of our new address.*

*We hope that you will enjoy your visit and be encouraged to see our other churches. Some are in towns; some in remote country districts. Some are easy and others hard to find but all are worth the effort.*

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CONINGTON, ALL SAINTS  
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## ST ANDREW'S CHURCH

STEEPLE GIDDING, CAMBRIDGESHIRE

by SIMON COTTON

There has been a church on this site since the 12th century and very probably longer. In 1178 Pope Alexander III confirmed that the advowson (the right to present a priest to the living) belonged to the Abbot of Ramsey. The area round here would have been settled in Romano-British times, the Roman Ermine Street crossing another Roman road at nearby Alconbury. The place name Gidding dates from the earlier period of Anglo-Saxon settlement, to judge by the '-ing' ending. The oldest part of the church is the 12th-century work in the south doorway. By 1260 the church had acquired a tower, giving the name of the settlement its present prefix and distinguishing it from the other Giddings. It was also sometimes referred to as Abbot's Gidding, because of the advowson. Little Gidding, with its beautiful church and community life, is associated for many people with two famous poets – George Herbert and T S Eliot.

The church lies on a ridge overlooking a valley in boulder-clay country in the old county of Huntingdonshire. It is actually surrounded on three sides by earthworks (see A E Brown and C C Taylor, *Proceedings of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society*, 1877, 90); those to the north seem to be closest, whilst those to the east, across the road, may represent the sites of mediaeval houses. Due south of the church is a level site, referred to in 1648 as 'The Orchard'. This site is thought to have been occupied by a 16th- or 17th-century manor house. It seems most likely that a house here was rebuilt by the Cottons in the late-17th century and that they rebuilt the gardens around it, living here until the mid-18th century when Sir John, the last of the Gidding side of the family, died.

### EXTERIOR

Most of the church was built in the 14th century. It was restored by the Victorians, the tower and spire in 1899, the rest in 1872–3 by Sir George Gilbert Scott, the elder, when the porch was rebuilt. The previous porch was in the 15th-century style; its Victorian replacement shelters an interesting

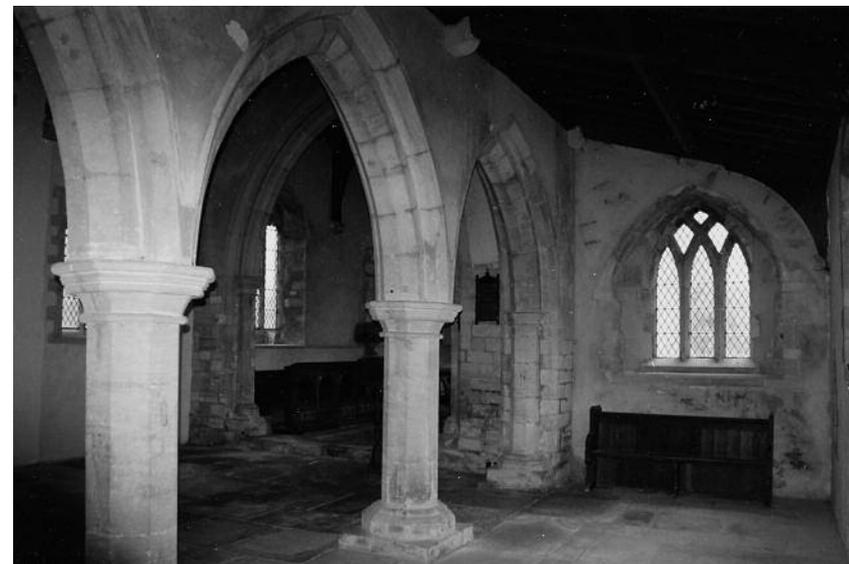


*Detail of the Norman south doorway*  
(CHRISTOPHER DALTON)

doorway, the oldest datable part of the church. The original 12th-century Norman doorway was taken down and rebuilt early in the 14th century, at the time when the rest of the church was reconstructed. The outer arch is round-headed with chevron (zigzag) moulding; the inner arch is pointed. The two capitals supporting the arch are different; both have leaf carving but that on the left bears a fluid, interlocked design in contrast to that on the right which is in the style characteristic of c.1220.

The masonry of the nave is quite neatly squared, contrasting with that of the chancel and tower. The arcade inside has columns and arches in the style of the early-14th century – the octagonal piers have contemporary capitals and bases supporting two-centred arches. The aisle and nave roofs are late-mediaeval in origin but now almost entirely 19th century.

Like the rest of the church, the aisle has windows in the early-14th-century style with ogee and intersecting tracery. The lancet window in the aisle west wall is a 19th-century copy. On the north side of the nave are two more 14th-century windows; like those on the south side, one of them has well carved heads as stops on the end of the moulding. One unusual survival, high on the buttress at the north-east corner of the nave, is an original consecration cross in stone. The clerestory has square-headed windows contemporary with the nave while the chancel, built around 1330, has the reticulated tracery of that time in its north and south windows. Though the east window is in the same style it dates from 1872, the year in which the chancel arch was rebuilt. The chancel roof is Victorian and is probably also of 1872. The 14th-century priest's doorway in the south wall



*Caption to come*

(PETER DE ROUGEMONT)

was to provide independent access for the incumbent, a reminder of the traditional division of responsibility for upkeep of the nave and the chancel between the parishioners and rector.

The west tower was built towards the end of the 14th century; like others in this area it is partially embraced by the west end of the nave. It is, however, more slender than most. Typically, it has diagonal buttresses at the corners; unusually, it has a small niche on its south face by the belfry window, this niche possibly once sheltering a statue. A slender spire rises from behind the parapet (which has gargoyles at the corners); there are two tiers of gabled windows on alternate cardinal faces of the spire and a splendid weathercock and vane of 1899.

The tower contains three bells, inscribed as follows:

1. *Sancta Anna ora pro nobis* (Saint Anne, pray for us),
2. *Vox Augustini sonet in aure Dei* (let the voice of Augustine sound in God's ear),
3. *J Eayre St. Neots fecit 1748 Disce Mori nostro vivere disce sone* (Learn to die and live from our sound).

1 and 2 were cast by William Chamberlain of London in the mid-15th century,

and 3 by Joseph Eayre of St Neots in 1748.

## INTERIOR

The church has a spacious interior now that it is uncluttered by pews, and the mediaeval floors can be admired. Inside the south door is a holy water stoup made from a Norman capital. The plain octagonal font bowl and stem could be of almost any date, but are most likely to be part of the 14th-century rebuilding. There is a floriated grave slab of that period built into the west wall of the aisle; at the east end of the aisle is an early-14th century piscina in the south wall, with ogee arch typical of the period.

The principal feature of the nave is the fine monument in the north wall to Sir Robert Cotton, Bart (1749) and his son, Sir John (1752) bearing an extended biographical inscription. It was erected by Dame Jane Cotton in 1752. There are many Cotton memorials at All Saints church, Conington, across the Great North Road (A1), which is also in the care of the Trust. An indent showing the former position of a mediaeval figure brass memorial can be seen in the nave floor.

In contrast to the nave, the chancel was given a major facelift in the 19th



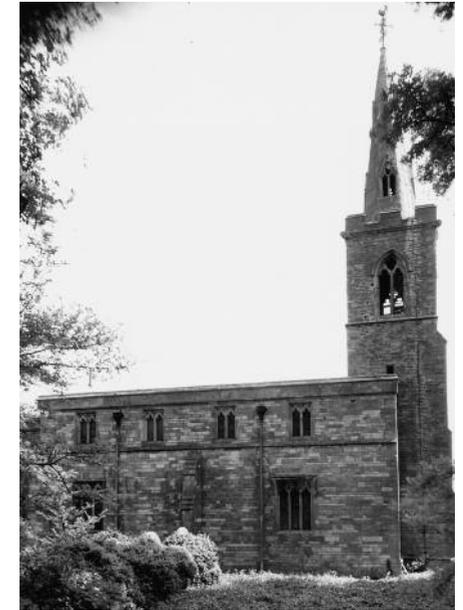
*Chancel stalls*

(CHRISTOPHER DALTON)

century. It will be noticed that the corbels supporting the nave roof are mediaeval, whilst those in the chancel are Victorian. Most of the chancel arch was rebuilt in 1872; the restoration gave the chancel and sanctuary the tiled floor (contrasting again with the nave), 'Gothic' choir stalls and altar rails, and a tiled dado behind the contemporary altar. The Victorian east window (presumably of 1872) features St Matthew (bearded, balding) and St John (clean shaven) flanking Christ as the Good Shepherd. Mediaeval features retained are the internal string-course round the walls and the triple sedilia (seats for three priests to use at High Mass) and piscina with credence shelf (to carry the cruets of wine and water).

The monument (1714) on the north wall is to Mary Kinyon, daughter of Sir John Cotton, Bart; it is topped by a white marble bust of her.

With only one communicant (aged 90) in 1871 and Little Gidding so close, redundancy was inevitable. The church was vested in The Churches Conservation Trust (then the Redundant Churches Fund) in 1976, repairs



*Detail of the Norman south doorway*

(CHRISTOPHER DALTON)

*Front cover: The chancel looking east* (CHRISTOPHER DALTON).

*Back cover: The south side of the church* (CHRISTOPHER DALTON).

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