

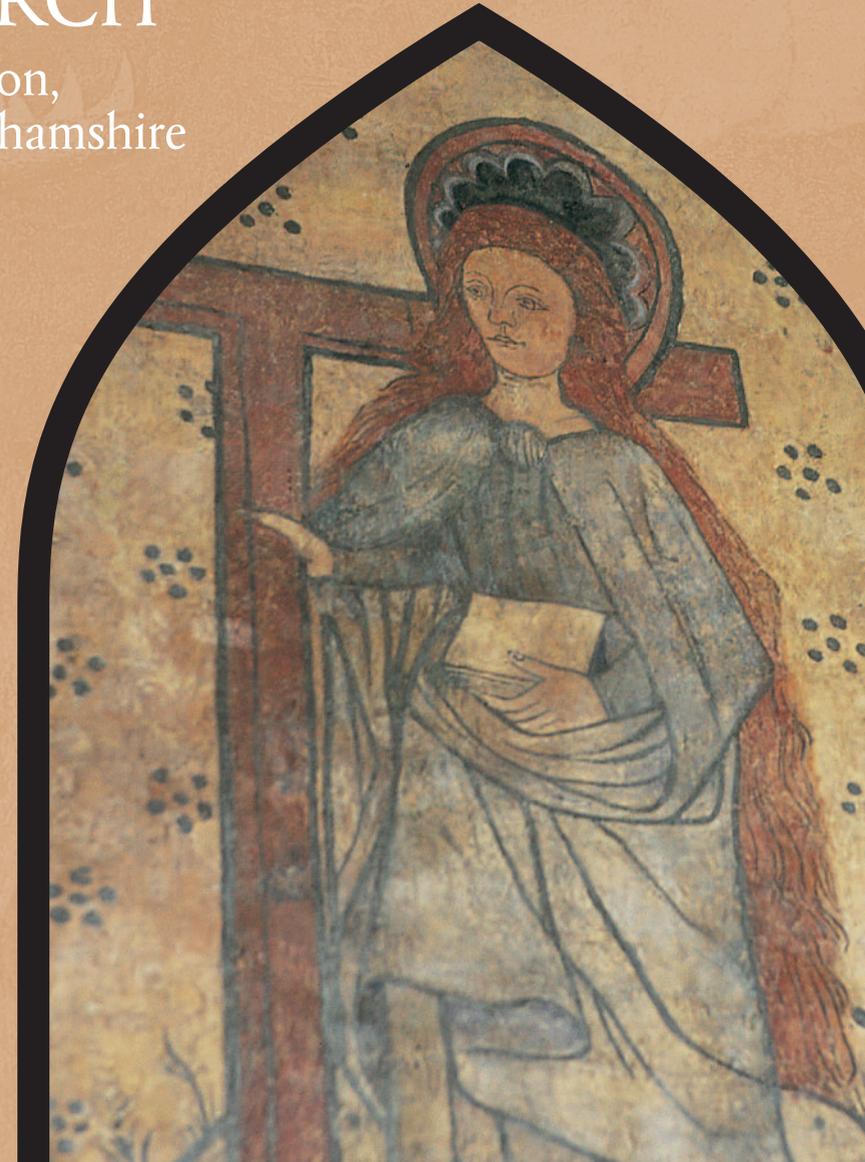


THE CHURCHES  
CONSERVATION TRUST



# ST LAWRENCE'S CHURCH

Broughton,  
Buckinghamshire



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CONSERVATION TRUST

1 West Smithfield London EC1A 9EE

Tel: 020 7213 0660 Fax: 020 7213 0678 Email: [central@tcct.org.uk](mailto:central@tcct.org.uk)

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*Broughton, Buckinghamshire*

# ST LAWRENCE'S CHURCH

*by Roy Tricker (Field Officer with The Churches Conservation Trust 1991–2002, church enthusiast, historian and lay canon)*

## HISTORY

The ancient church of St Lawrence stands, with its tiny village, in a quiet cul-de-sac near the eastern edge of the collection of communities which now comprise the City of Milton Keynes. The place name Broughton comes from the Old English *broc* and *tun* and means 'village on a brook'. The dedication to St Lawrence the martyr is one of only about six in the county.

Despite the tremendous amount of urban development within the area which forms this 20th-century city, Broughton's small community has not grown. The network of new roads has avoided it and the village street has become a 'no through road'. The estimated population in 1989 was only 60 people and the church at Milton Keynes Village is barely three-quarters of a mile (1.2 km) away, as the crow flies. It is not surprising therefore that St Lawrence's church, because of its outstanding interest, was vested in what is now The Churches Conservation Trust in 1987. Its former parish has become part of the Walton Team Ministry, together with Wavendon, Kent's Hill, Milton Keynes Village and the former parish of Walton.

Much has been done since 1987 to conserve and maintain the fabric of the church and the important series of wall paintings, under the direction of the architect Ian Stewart of London.

*Front cover: St Helena (south nave wall)  
(Boris Baggs)*

*Left: Section of the 'Pietà' painting on  
the nave north wall (Boris Baggs)*





*Left: Exterior from the south-west  
(Boris Baggs)*

*Right: Mediaeval south door  
with original sanctuary ring  
(Christopher Dalton)*

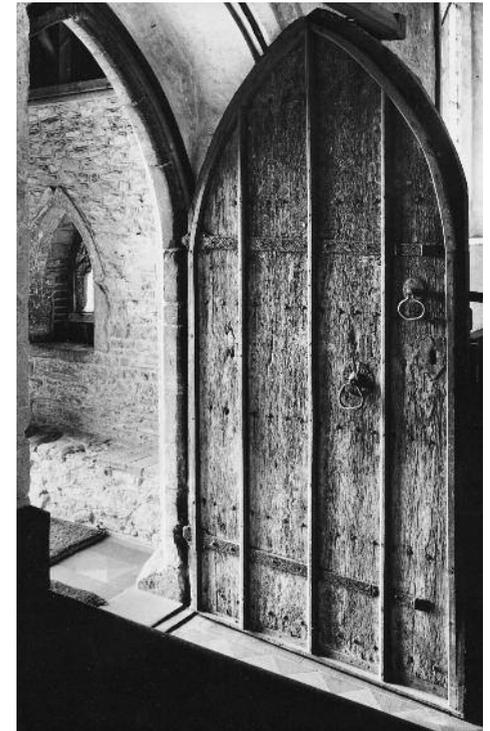
## EXTERIOR

Despite the distant roar of traffic (the M1 motorway is less than half a mile (0.8km) away), the **setting** of this church is still rural and its grey limestone walls, with the golden stone in the parapets and tower corners, blend happily with the greens of the tree-shaded churchyard. In the grass near the path to the south of the church is a worn mediaeval **coffin lid**.

Much of the visible work here dates from the 14th century, although the core of the building may well be earlier. The three-light north-west and south-west windows in the **nave** have original reticulated (net-like) tracery of c.1330, and the south-east nave window has Perpendicular tracery of c.1400. The tracery of the other nave windows was renewed in the 1880–81 restoration. The disused north doorway contains a mediaeval door, and at the east end of the nave on this side is the turret containing the rood-loft staircase.

The **chancel** windows all received new stonework in the 19th century. Originally the large single southern window may well have been a two-light window. The east window has three lights and the north window has been given simple plate tracery (the style used in the late 13th century). There is a priest's doorway on this side.

The shallow-pitched roofs and plain parapets to nave and chancel help to enhance the proportions of the embattled western **tower**, which reaches a height of 55 feet (16.8 m) and



is pierced by two-light early Perpendicular windows of c.1400. The belfry windows are particularly effective – their arches are framed with hood moulds which rest upon carved corbel heads. Small windows light the staircase turret, which ascends the north-west corner of the tower.

The south **porch** has been rebuilt, using original 14th-century materials, including the small and attractive two-light windows. It shelters a sturdy mediaeval door – possibly 600 years old – still equipped with its original sanctuary ring (and iron boss), which fugitives grasped in order to claim the right of sanctuary afforded them within the confines of the church.

# INTERIOR

The uncomplicated plan of the church comprises tower, nave, south porch and chancel. The lofty **tower arch** is simply chamfered and dates from c.1400, whilst the **chancel arch**, which is small and elegant, was fashioned in the early 14th century; its inner moulding rests upon two beautifully-preserved corbel heads.

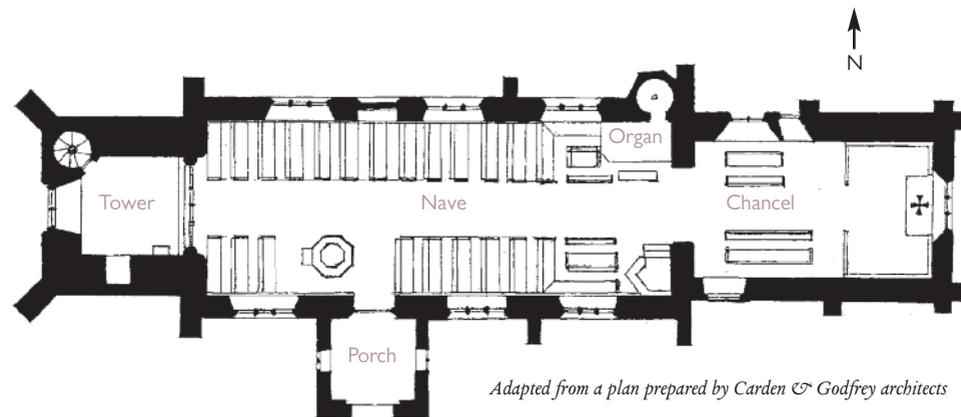
A 19th-century **screen** leads to the base of the tower where, in the south wall, is a curious opening which may have been a former entrance and which shows the great thickness of the tower wall. Here is also stored a **bier**, made in 1683 to transport the coffin at a funeral.

The tower contains four **bells**, hanging in an oak frame dated 1628, and a small sanctus bell.

The treble was cast by Anthony Chandler of Drayton Parslow in 1655, the second and tenor by William Chamberlain of London in the mid-15th century; and the third and the sanctus by James Keene of Woodstock, in 1622 and 1635 respectively.

The nave and chancel **roofs** are low-pitched and supported by sturdy tie beams. Although greatly restored and renewed in 1849, they incorporate much older timber. From the nave roof hang three **chandeliers** which date probably from the 18th century.

The octagonal **font** was made in 1859, when the chancel was also restored. Further restoration of the church took place in phases between 1864 and 1881, to the designs of



William White, an imaginative Gothic Revival architect, who created several dignified and devotional churches throughout the country.

In the blocked north doorway is a **Table of Benefactions** and gifts to the church in 1673, 1716 and 1787, painted upon canvas. The **benches** date from 1849, but incorporate in their backs some panelling from the box pews which preceded them; more has been used in the wainscotting along the lower parts of the

walls, The **pulpit** is also 18th century and was probably once part of a two- or three-decker arrangement.

The single-manual and pedal **organ** was moved to its present position in 1903 under the supervision of a Mr Wilford (a Newport Pagnell architect), and seats for the choir were placed nearby. Behind the organ, the **staircase** to the former rood loft is still in place and its upper entrance is seen in the wall above.

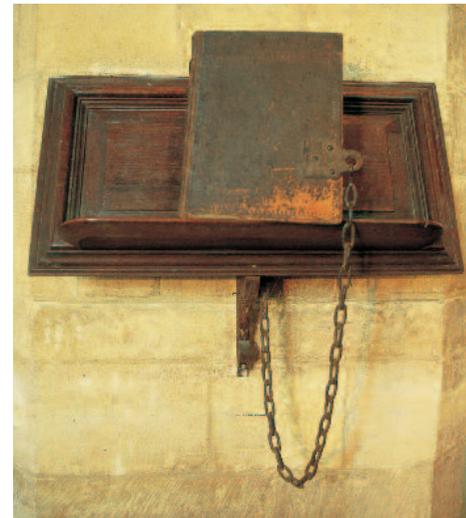


Chained to small wooden desks beneath the chancel arch are two fine old books. On the south side is a **Paraphrase of the Gospels** by Erasmus, given to the church in 1632 and, on the north side, Bishop Jewel's **Defence of the Apologie of the Church of England**, published in 1567.

The chancel, which is darkened somewhat by rich 19th-century glass (by CE Kempe and Alexander Gibbs), is furnished with **stalls** dating from William White's restoration. The sanctuary is paved with square pammets, probably of the 18th century. There is 17th-century woodwork in the **parish chest** on the south side



## WALL PAINTINGS



The magnificent **wall paintings** are among the finest in this part of England. They were plastered over in the mid-16th century and revealed in the 1849 restoration. They received treatment by Professor Tristram in 1932 and were further conserved by the Perry Lithgow Partnership in 1990.

They were originally painted in the 15th century to teach the Faith to those people who could neither read nor understand the Latin of the scriptures and services. They include the following scenes:

■ **OVER THE NORTH DOORWAY** A dramatic painting of the Doom (**The Last Judgement**). Amongst the many characters here, we see the Angel sounding the Last Trumpet, St Michael weighing a soul who has risen from a tomb and Our Lady placing her finger on the scales in favour of the soul. On the left is the Gate of Heaven, with a figure on the battlements above, and also a large seated figure. At the bottom right-hand side are the gaping jaws of Hell, with the souls consigned there. At the top is the lower part of a large figure – possibly God the Father, or Our Lord – coming in the clouds. A splendid angel stands with a sword at the top right-hand side.

■ **NORTH WALL** A painting (c. 1470) of the 'Pietà' showing the dead **Christ in the Arms of his Mother**. His right arm and leg are broken and mutilated. This central scene is surrounded by nine men (in mediaeval costume),

(originally equipped with three locks, to which the Rector and Churchwardens each had keys), and incorporated into the **gradine** upon which the cross and candlesticks stand. The **panelling** around the sanctuary walls was designed by Talbot Brown of Wellingborough and erected in memory of Colonel Arthur Good in 1931.



Detail of the Doom painting over the north doorway (Boris Baggs)



Right: 'Pietà' painting on the nave north wall (The Conway Library, Courtauld Institute of Art)

Below: SS Helena and Eligius on the south nave wall (Boris Baggs)

who carry portions of the body of Jesus – bones, limbs, etc. One carries the Sacred Heart and another the Sacred Host – the Body of Christ in the consecrated bread of the Eucharist. At the bottom of the picture, two men quarrel over a game of backgammon. It has been suggested that one of the purposes of this painting was a warning to mediaeval people that they injured Our Lord when they swore oaths by parts of His body.

■ **SOUTH WALL, EASTERN PAINTING** The figure of **St Helena**, carrying the Holy Cross. She was the mother of the Emperor Constantine and died c.330. She is believed to have discovered the base of the cross upon which Jesus died. She carries a T-shaped cross, which was its original Latin form. Beside her is the figure of **St Eligius** (or St Eloi), the patron saint of farriers and blacksmiths, who was Bishop of Tournai and died in 695. Beneath him is a collection of blacksmith's tools and products, and also a man on horseback (now partly obscured by a later plaque).

■ **ABOVE THE SOUTH DOORWAY** is a large and dramatic painting of **St George** in armour emblazoned with his red cross on a white background. He is on horseback, destroying a particularly fearful and venomous dragon, breathing fire and fumes and having a further head (with tongue) in its tail. Nearby stands the Lady Cleodelinda, with her little sheep, waiting to be rescued. This is the work of a late-15th-century artist; sadly later restoration of the roof has destroyed the saint's helmet.

■ The north and south walls, beneath the scenes, have **dados of red and white squares and rectangles** in chequer fashion, of late-14th-century date. In the section beneath St George are also **'IHS'** monograms of Our Lord's name.

■ There also remain some of the Biblical **texts** which people of the late 16th century painted to replace the wall paintings. These are executed in beautiful lettering of the period, set in circles with scrolls in the borders.



## STAINED GLASS

Several of the windows contain 19th-century **stained glass**, much of which was given in memory of people who were part of this church and parish. The following characters and scenes are depicted:

■ **CHANCEL, EAST WINDOW** Christ crucified, and flanked by Our Lady and St John, from the studios of Charles Eamer Kempe, and in memory of the Revd John William Irving, who died in 1893, having been Curate and Rector here for 50 years.

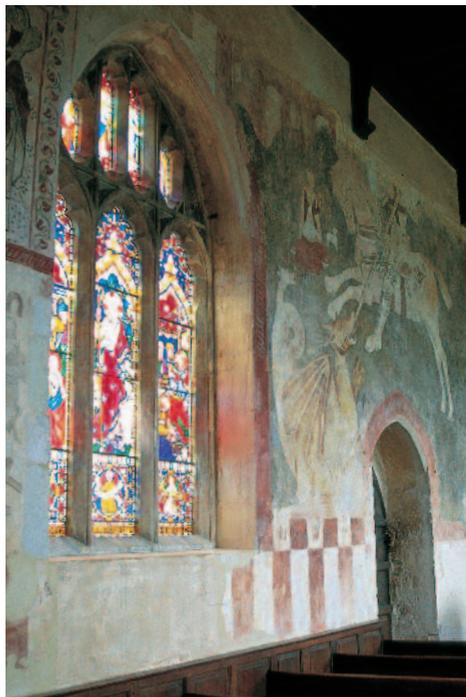
■ **CHANCEL, SOUTH WINDOW** The angels and the women at the empty tomb, also by CE Kempe, and a memorial to the Revd JW Irving's wife Ann (d.1852).

■ **CHANCEL, NORTH WINDOW** St John and St Anne, in memory of their namesakes, John and Anne Marsh, who died within a month of each other in 1858. By Alexander Gibbs.

■ **NAVE, SOUTH-EAST** A most unusual window, by E Horwood of Frome, given by the Rector in 1887 to commemorate 100 years of Missionary Bishops in the Colonies. It shows Jesus, flanked by two Missionary Bishops who were martyred for their faith – John Coleridge Patterson (d.1871) and James Hannington (d.1885).

■ **NAVE, NORTH-EAST** Scenes of Ruth gleaning, David with his sheep and harp, and Jesus telling the Parable of the Mustard Seed. In memory of Mr W Ridgway, a farmer (d.1866).

■ **NAVE, SOUTH, CENTRAL WINDOW** Martha speaking to Jesus after the death of Lazarus, Jesus the Good Shepherd and the woman with the alabaster box of ointment. This glass, by Alexander Gibbs, is in memory of Mary Clarkson, widow of the Vicar of Roxton and Great Barford, Bedfordshire (d.1864).



## MEMORIALS

Amongst the other memorials on the walls and floors of the church are the following:

■ On the south chancel wall are two **brass inscriptions**. The upper commemorates Agnes, wife of John de Broughton (d.1399) and the lower is to her husband (d.1403).

■ A fine **wall-plaque** on the north chancel wall, which has an open pediment at the top, with a cartouche upon which is a coat of arms, commemorates Thomas Duncombe (d.1672).

■ In the sanctuary floor are five **ledger slabs** (some partly concealed by the altar). The northernmost, to Mary Duncombe (née Chester, d.1683), has an incised coat of arms.

■ On the south chancel wall hangs the diamond-shaped **hatchment** of Frances Duncombe (d.1720). Hatchments were displayed outside the home of a deceased person for a while, before being placed in the parish church.



*Left: The nave south wall, looking south-west, showing the painting of St George and the dragon (Boris Baggs)*

*Right: Interior looking west (Christopher Dalton)*

# THE CHURCHES CONSERVATION TRUST

The Churches Conservation Trust is the leading charity that cares for and preserves English churches of historic, architectural or archaeological importance that are no longer needed for regular worship. It promotes public enjoyment of them and their use as an educational and community resource.

Whatever the condition of the church when the Trust takes it over its aims are, first and foremost, to put the building and its contents into a sound and secure condition as speedily as possible. Then the church is repaired so that the church is welcoming to visitors and those who attend the public events or occasional services that may be held there (Trust churches are still consecrated). Our objective is to keep it intact for the benefit of present and future generations, for local people and visitors alike to behold and enjoy.

There are over 330 Trust churches scattered widely through the length and breadth of England, in town and country, ranging from charmingly simple buildings in lovely settings to others of great richness and splendour; some are hard to find, all are worth the effort.

Many of the churches are open all year round, others have keyholders nearby; all are free. A notice regarding opening arrangements or keyholders will normally be found near the door. Otherwise, such information can be obtained direct from the Trust during office hours or from the website [www.visitchurches.org.uk](http://www.visitchurches.org.uk).

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

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10 miles S of Northampton off A508

St Mary, Pottesgrove  
5 miles NE of Leighton Buzzard, off A5

St Michael, Thornton  
4 miles NE of Buckingham off A422

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