

Bibliography

of John Goom, architect, of Evesham. The works included re-roofing, pointing of the walls, plaster repairs, repair of the woodwork of the south door, improving the drainage and ventilation, and conservation of some of the wall paintings. Asbestos panels were removed from the ceilings and substituted with a recycled timber board which was given a skim in traditional lime plaster. Disabled access from the village road to the church was also improved.

- Anon. 1907. 'Proceedings of the Annual Spring Meeting' in *Transactions of the Bristol & Gloucestershire Archaeological Society* 30, 2–3.
- Bigland, R 1992. *Historical, Monumental and Genealogical Collections relative to the County of Gloucester*, part 3, ed. B Frith for Bristol & Gloucestershire Archaeological Society. Stroud, Alan Sutton.
- Elders, J 2002. *Pastoral Measure Report: Shipton Sollars St Mary*. London, Council for the Care of Churches.
- Heighway, C 2004. *The Church of Shipton Sollars St Mary, Gloucestershire: an archaeological assessment* (typescript report).
- Herbert N M (ed.) 2001. *Victoria History of the County of Gloucester*, vol. 9, 187–208. Oxford, Institute of Historical Research.
- Verey, D and Brooks, A 1999. *Buildings of England, Gloucestershire I*, 3rd edition, London, Penguin, 608–609.

Photograph by Christopher Dalton

Acknowledgements

The author gratefully acknowledges the help of Mrs Lucy Evans and the late Mr John Evans with the preparation of this guidebook.

THE CHURCHES CONSERVATION TRUST

The Churches Conservation Trust is the national 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. In 2009 the Trust celebrates 40 years of saving historic churches at risk.

There are over 340 Trust churches scattered widely through the length and breadth of England, in town and country, ranging from ancient, rustic buildings to others of great richness and splendour; each tells a unique story of people and place. All are worth visiting.

Many churches are open all year round, others have keyholders nearby; entry is free to all. A notice explaining opening arrangements or keyholders will normally be found at the church. Such information can also be obtained from the Trust during office hours.

We strongly recommend checking our website www.visitchurches.org.uk for the most up to date opening and access details and directions.

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

Historic churches, due to their age and previous use, often have uneven and worn floors. Please take care, especially in wet weather when floors and steps can also be slippery.

Making a donation

Your donation, no matter how small, will enable The Churches Conservation Trust to save more historic churches across England. If you would like to make a contribution, please use a Gift Aid envelope located at the church you visit, see our website www.visitchurches.org.uk, or contact our fundraising team on 020 7213 0673.

Nearby are the Trust churches of
St Michael and St Martin, Eastleach Martin
4 miles N of Lechlade off A361 or A417

St Nicholas, Gloucester
Westgate Street in city centre

St Mary, Little Washbourne
6 miles E of Tewkesbury off B4077,
5 miles E of M5 Junction 9



THE CHURCHES
CONSERVATION TRUST

1 West Smithfield London EC1A 9EE

Tel: 020 7213 0660 Fax: 020 7213 0678 Email: central@tcct.org.uk
www.visitchurches.org.uk Registered Charity No. 258612 Spring 2009

© The Churches Conservation Trust 2009

£1.00



THE CHURCHES
CONSERVATION TRUST

CHURCH OF ST MARY

Shipton Sollars,
Gloucestershire



Church of ST MARY

by Andrew Pike (Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries. Regional Development Manager with The Churches Conservation Trust 1994–2006. Previously an archaeologist with Buckinghamshire County Museum Service)

History

The two villages of Shipton Sollars (or Solers) and Shipton Oliffe are, in effect, one place, situated along narrow lanes near Andoversford, east of Cheltenham but divided by the infant River Coln. Both Shiptons were distinct manors in the medieval period and each had its own manor house, rectory and church. Shipton Oliffe's church, St Oswald, dates from the 13th century and is situated barely half a mile (0.8km) from St Mary's. The present manor house of Shipton Sollars, which is adjacent to the churchyard on the east, is of 17th-century date but is likely to be on or near the site of its medieval predecessor, as the survival of a section of the moat would seem to suggest.

Shipton – ‘sheep farm’ – was a single entity at the time of Domesday Book (1086) but soon afterwards the manor passed through different families, leading to the creation of two separate manors. During the Middle Ages the manor of Shipton Sollars was owned successively by the Pelye, Champfleur and Chandos families and was, for a time, known as Shipton Champfleur and later Shipton Tyrel. The de Solers family first appears on the scene in the mid-13th century with Simon. In 1317 Robert de Solers is mentioned as the patron of the church. The manor descended through successive generations, mainly down the

female line until, in 1900, the estate was broken up and sold. The population of both Shiptons has always been small, rising to a peak of 376 in 1881. The two Shiptons became a single civil parish in 1871. Earthworks in the fields west of the church suggest the village was more extensive than is now the case. In the 19th century the parish was crossed by two railways: the Banbury & Cheltenham and the Midland & South-Western Junction (Cheltenham to Andover), both closed in the 1960s.

The rectory at Shipton Sollars is mentioned in 1584, was rebuilt in the 1620s but partly collapsed in 1797. It was rebuilt again in 1863 and stands south-east of the church. The two Shipton parishes were generally served by one incumbent from 1663 and the benefices were formally united in 1776, when Shipton Sollars was designated the ‘mother church’. But by 1830 St Mary's was virtually abandoned. In 1870 it was described as ‘now wholly disused. Neglect and decay have done the work of spoil and defacement’. Charles Pugh, the rector in 1883, found the church full of cows, its windows blocked and trees growing through the roof. He and his wife repaired it and services resumed in 1884 only to cease again in the early 20th century. In 1929 work to restore and re-furnish the church to the designs of W E Ellery Anderson of Cheltenham began under the auspices of E F Fieldhouse in memory of his parents.

Exterior

St Mary's stands within a small, nearly square churchyard. It was probably consecrated in 1212: the date was found to be inscribed over the chancel arch during repairs in 1929–30.

The church consists of a nave and chancel, both dating from the 13th century, and a stone bell-cote. Most of the windows are Perpendicular in style and date, although a lancet of the 13th century survives in the chancel. There are doorways in the north and south walls – the oak south door is likely to be late medieval. A straight joint in the south wall of the chancel is probably the east jamb of a long-blocked doorway, although it has been suggested as indicating the lengthening of the chancel at some time in the later medieval period. The church is built of coursed local limestone rubble, with limestone ashlar quoins. The roofs are covered with Cotswold stone slates.

The bell-cote, which contains one small bell probably of the later 19th century, replaced a wooden turret some time in the mid-19th century and is surmounted by a small stone cross. There is a similar stone cross on the central gable and the remains of a larger cross – probably of medieval date – on the east gable of the chancel.

Interior

The narrow chancel arch is 13th century in date. On its north side – on the east wall of the nave – there is a small recess, perhaps an aumbry or cupboard. Unusually the chancel is at a lower level than the nave but this may simply be due to the church being built on a slope.

The roofs are of a simple king-post construction supporting a wagon roof, perhaps of the 15th century.

Much remains of various schemes of wall painting. In both the chancel and nave are several consecration crosses, painted in a red lead pigment and dating probably from the 14th or 15th century. Each one has a circular hole at its centre, now filled with plaster. No doubt these once carried fixings for lamps or candleholders. Located throughout the church are several biblical texts including the Ten Commandments, many of which have been overpainted at various periods, although all appear to be post-Reformation. Painted directly onto the masonry of the chancel arch is a text, presumably from the bible and now only partially legible but containing the words ‘God’, ‘sent’, ‘for’, ‘King’.

At the east end of the chancel the altar comprises a stone *mensa* or slab. This probably dates to the consecration of the church in the 13th century. It was found under the floor during the restoration work of 1929–30 when it was mounted on stone columns. The south wall of the chancel contains a 13th-century piscina (a basin for washing the communion vessels) and on the north wall there is an aumbry – a recess or cupboard where the communion vessels were stored. The wooden reredos behind the altar is a crucifixion scene designed, carved

and gilded by Ellery Anderson. The panelling also dates from 1929–30.

In the nave, the hexagonal oak pulpit is of the Elizabethan or early Jacobean period, with a sounding board or tester above. The wrought iron hourglass stand on the adjacent wall replaces one stolen in the 1990s. At the Restoration in 1660 increasing emphasis was placed on sermons in services. These were expected to last at least one hour – and the sand in the hourglass normally took that time to run through. At the foot of the pulpit are buried Ernest Fieldhouse (1888–1962) and his wife Evelyn (1892–1986) who were responsible for the major restoration of the church in 1929–30. Many of the furnishings, such as the lectern, were given by the Fieldhouses.

The 15th-century font is of limestone and octagonal in shape with a modern base.

Some fragments of 15th-century stained glass survive in the south and west nave windows. Other windows are filled with good quality work of the 1930s by Geoffrey Webb. The east window depicts the Ascension and commemorates Evelina Pearce (d.1929), whilst the two medallions in the large south window commemorate Ernest Fieldhouse – both are rebuses or puns on names. The left-hand one depicts a house in a field (‘Fieldhouse’), whilst the right-hand one shows a tun or cask in front of a ship (‘Shipton’).

Monuments

There are four wall monuments. On the north wall of the nave is one to John Powell (d.1734) and family. It is oval in shape, surmounted by a winged cherub and bordered by leaf and scroll decoration. On the north side of the chancel is a small bronze engraved memorial to Joseph Walker, rector

of the Shiptons (d.1706). On the south wall of the nave is a monument to Sarah Roberts, who died in childbirth in 1671.

Her beauty Youth her Prudence Piety/All call for tears in trickles from thine eye/When childbearing was neare then Sarah laught/Not for distrust but Death had bent its shaft/Against her breast. Her soules fled to the skies/This marble heere weeps out her obsequies.

The monument is flanked by scroll brackets and is surmounted by a winged skull, with a cherub at the base. The fourth monument comprises a heart-shaped panel and winged cherub above and beneath. It is now almost undecipherable except for the date 1697, though it was recorded in 1870 as being for Thomas Roberts, who died on 10 October 1697.

There are several ledger slabs set into the stone floor, dating from the late 17th and 18th centuries. Six were recorded and transcribed by Ralph Bigland in 1870.

The registers begin in 1653, although there are no entries for the period 1711–43. From the later 18th century registers for Shipton Sollars and Shipton Oliffe were combined. They are deposited at the Diocesan Record Office, Gloucester.

Recent History

The church continued in use during the later 20th century but the burden of responsibility for two medieval churches was becoming too much for a small village, itself now part of a single benefice consisting of eight parishes. Consequently St Mary's was declared redundant and vested in The Churches Conservation Trust in July 2005. Shortly afterwards the Trust initiated an extensive programme of repairs under the supervision