



THE CHURCHES
CONSERVATION TRUST

ALL SAINTS' CHURCH

Shorncote,
Gloucestershire



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CONSERVATION TRUST

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ALL SAINTS' CHURCH

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HISTORY

The tiny, attractive Cotswold village of Shorncote or Sharncote belies the origin of its name. In Old English it means 'the cottage in a mucky spot or dung-hill'. Nowadays its stone-built dwellings are well cared for and the gardens lovingly tended by their inhabitants. The village lies in the flat valley of the Thames, barely two miles (3 km) from the river's source.

Until 1896 Shorncote was a part of Wiltshire; it was then transferred to Gloucestershire. It lay within the Diocese of Salisbury until 1826, since when it has been in the Diocese of Gloucester. From the early 17th century, at least, the parish has been linked with neighbouring Somerford Keynes, the two parishes often sharing an incumbent. They were formally united in 1881 and, in more recent times, have been joined with other parishes in the vicinity including Kemble and Poole Keynes.

When Domesday Book was compiled in 1086, only 11 men lived on the manor; in 1334, 16. In the 14th century the total population was about 25, since when it has remained much the same.

*Front cover: Exterior from the north-west
(© Crown copyright. NMR)*

*Left: Interior looking west
(© Crown copyright. NMR)*



The CHURCH EXTERIOR

All Saints' is situated in a rectangular churchyard surrounded by a wall of Cotswold stone. The church comprises a nave and chancel, north chapel and south porch. The walls are built of local Cotswold yellow oolitic limestone and the roofs covered with Cotswold stone slates.

The church seems originally to have been built about 1170, subsequent additions being the north chapel and south porch, both dating from the later 14th century. There was a restoration by William Butterfield in 1883 which cost nearly £1000.

The south doorway and blocked north doorway are both Norman – the north doorway being the more elaborate. Its tympanum, recut to a triangular shape, has been reused as a threshold. The stones of the south doorway contain two scratch dials and two graffiti, inscribed 'WE 1716' and 'TB 1704'. Above is an empty niche, intended for a small statue. The porch has stone benches on each side. Above the outer doorway is a small sundial, set on a square stone. Now much worn it is impossible to date, though it is likely to be 17th or 18th century.



The west wall appears to have been rebuilt when the two-light west window was inserted about 1370, at the same time that the two-light window in the south wall of the nave was installed. The gabled bell turret is also late 14th century in origin and comprises two arched bays for bells. A 19th-century cross and weathercock now surmount the bell-cote. Only one bell now remains, though two are recorded in 1553. It is inscribed 'A : R 1706', i.e. Abraham Rudhall I of Gloucester.

*Exterior from the south-west
(© Crown copyright. NMR)*

INTERIOR

The chancel has two north and two south windows, all of which have graffiti on their sills. A third window on the north side, of Norman date, has been blocked and an attractive 14th-century niche inserted into it – perhaps intended as an Easter sepulchre.

The more westerly north window has the lid of a 13th-century coffin as its sill. To the north of the east window is a chamfered stone shelf, which may once have held a figure of the Virgin Mary or some other saint or, perhaps, provided somewhere for the communion vessels or service books. The south window nearer to the altar has a small funnel-shaped piscina incorporated into its sill. It has a square drain and three petals of a flower – or they might be three fishes – carved below. Near this window is a small rectangular aumbry or cupboard, which would once have had a door. Between the two windows is a small priest's door, the woodwork of which is probably 18th century. The wagon-shaped roof with its plaster vault has carved bosses and probably dates from the 14th century. The little communion table with baluster legs is late 17th century. The communion rails and reading desk are Victorian and probably by Butterfield.

The narrow chancel arch into the nave is contemporary with the earliest parts of the church, about 1170. The doors into the nave, dating to the 15th century, may have been constructed from the former rood screen. Two steps of the stair to the rood loft, together

Left: The chancel (© Crown copyright. NMR)

Below: Capital of the chancel arch, south side



with the wooden lintel of the doorway, remain behind the pulpit.

The wagon-shaped nave roof dates from about 1370. It formerly had a plaster-vaulted ceiling.

The pulpit apparently dates from 1727. Above it is a hexagonal tester or sounding-board, suspended by a chain. Other furnishings such as the pews and the priest's stall date from Butterfield's restoration.

Two fragments of a mediaeval cross shaft are built into the reveal of the west window (others may be seen outside in the quoins of the north chapel wall). The blocking of the north door has created a curious recess, the purpose of which is unknown.

The plain tub-shaped font is Norman.

There is a Victorian oak altar at the west end of the nave, probably by Butterfield.

A pointed arch on the north side of the nave gives access to the north chapel, two steps above the level of the nave. On the south wall is an arched piscina with hexagonal drain, indicating that there was once an altar here. The east wall contains a curious pointed niche that may once have contained a statue of the Virgin Mary. The chapel contains a bier of late-19th-century date, together with a large and a small chest, both also probably of the 19th century.

The east window of the chancel contains a shield of the Berkeley arms of mediaeval date.



The greenish glass is probably of similar date. The floral patterned glass in the window of the north chapel is probably early.

The north wall of the chancel contains remains of wall paintings, perhaps of 12th- or early 13th-century dates, comprising a consecration cross superimposed by a masonry pattern with a petalled flower in the centre of each rectangle. A similar pattern is also visible on the west wall around the chancel arch.



Over the chancel arch is a fine royal arms of the Hanoverian period (1714–1801) carved in stone.

In the nave are monuments to Richard Kemble (d. 1733), Joseph Mill (d. 1857) by Edward King of Bath, and William Mill (d. 1820) by Richard Mills of Cirencester. There are a number of ledger stones set into the floor.

In the north chapel is a Charity Board dated 25 January 1858 detailing the provisions of the will of Joseph Mill, whose monument is in the nave. He left the sum of £500 to be invested for providing blankets and clothing for the poor of the parish 'most in need of such assistance'.

The tiny community was finding it increasingly difficult to fund the necessary repairs and maintenance needed to All Saints' Church. Consequently, it was declared redundant in 1984, and vested in The Churches Conservation Trust three years later. Since then, repairs have been carried out by the Trust, initially under the supervision of John Sparrow, ARIBA, and latterly under Andrew Townsend, Dip (Arch) of Faringdon. Locally, the church is still much loved; the three or four services held in it each year are well supported.

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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.

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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.

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

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4 miles N of Lechlade off A361 or A417

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1 mile S of Lechlade off A361

Old Saints Old Chancel, Leigh
3 miles W of Cricklade off B4040

St Saviour, Tetbury
New Church Street, just off Tetbury town centre

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