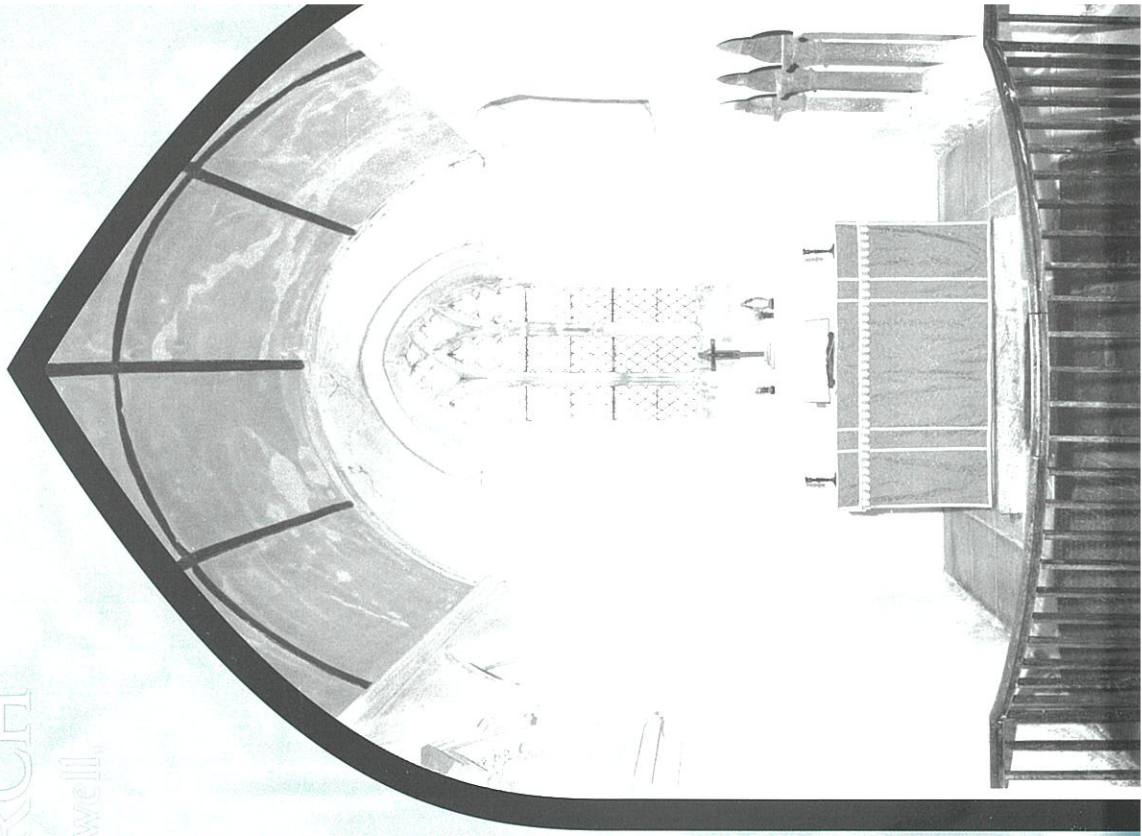


WEST OGWELL CHURCH

West Ogwell,
Devon



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 Summer 2007

West Ogwell, Devon

WEST OGWELL CHURCH

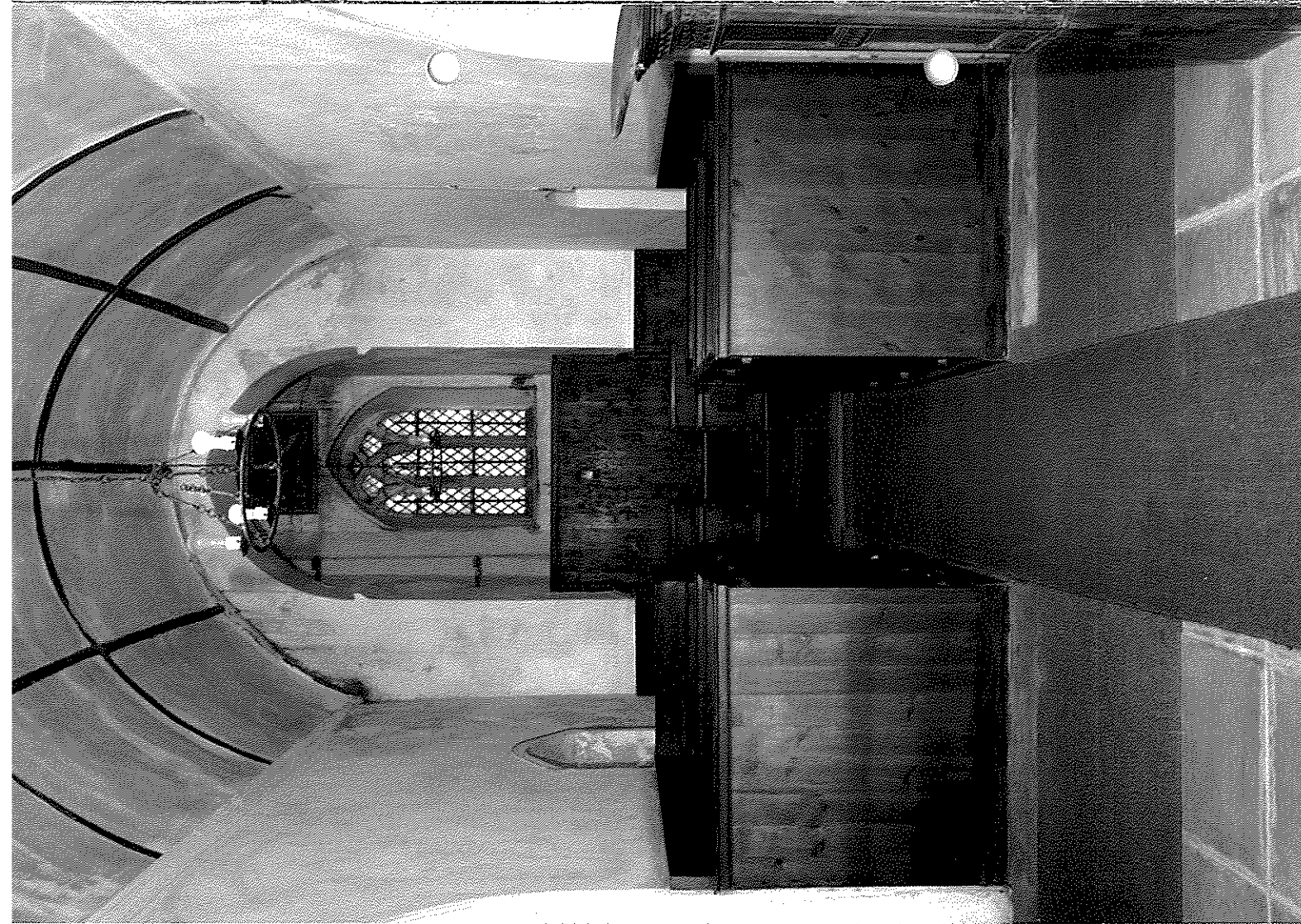
by Marie McDevon (Retired teacher and lecturer. Long and architectural historian with a particular interest in vernacular architecture and parish churches)

INTRODUCTION

The place name Ogwell (*Woggampylle* in 956) originally referred to Wogga's or Wogga's spring or stream. Several manors of that name occur in Domesday Book (perhaps resulting from the earlier subdivision of a large Saxon estate), one of which was held by a Saxon named Edric in 1066. This has been identified as the later *West* Ogwell, although the prefix is not recorded until 1242. After the Conquest it was held by William Peytevin (William of Poitou), a sub-tenant of Ralph de Pomeroy. The Peytevins held land in West Ogwell until the 14th century, as did the Boyviles or Beviles (initially as under-tenants of the Peytevins) from the 13th to the 15th centuries.

*Front cover: The chancel before the plastered ceiling was removed in 1994
(© Crown copyright. NMMR.)*

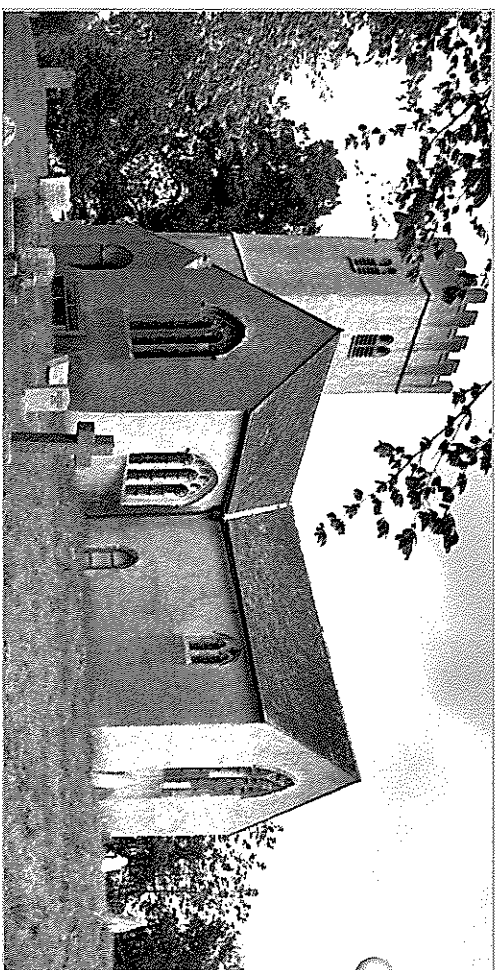
*Left: Looking west before the plastered ceiling was removed in 1994
(© Crown copyright. NMMR.)*



WEST OGWELL HOUSE

The Reynell family, who were already established at East Ogwell, acquired land in West Ogwell in or before the mid-16th century, and in 1589 Thomas Reynell built West Ogwell House next to the church, supposedly with the labour of Spanish captives from the Armada. He and his descendants lived at West Ogwell until the 18th century, when the property passed, through marriage, to the Taylor family, who rebuilt the front of the house in 1790. The Reynells and Taylors were patrons of the living of West Ogwell and occasionally appointed relatives such as John Reynell, who in 1684 was accused of neglecting his clerical duties, and Henry Taylor (d. 1861), whose memorial is on the north wall of the chancel.

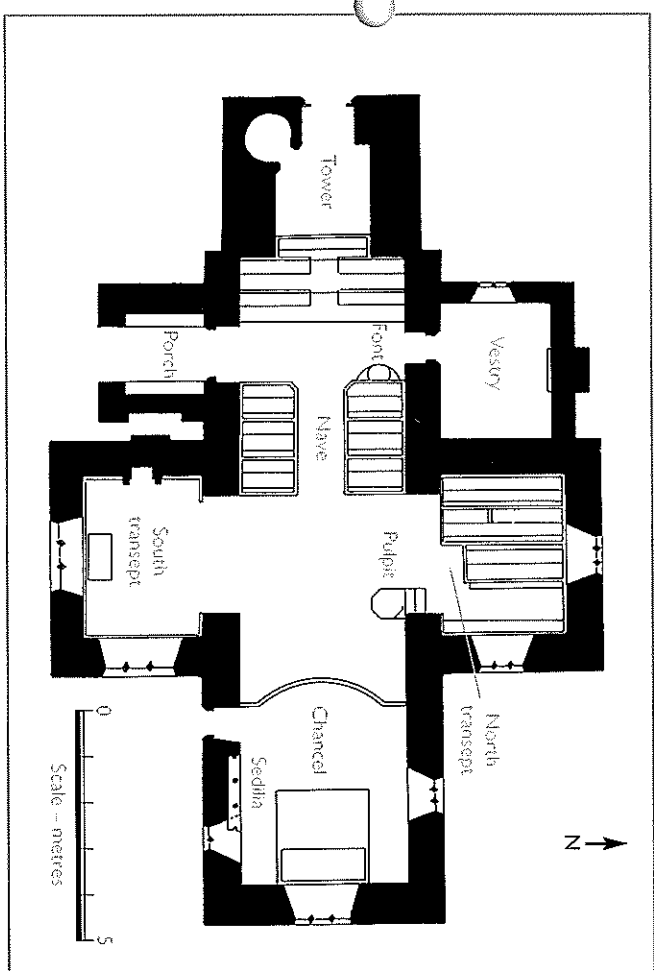
Daniel Scratton became squire and patron in 1869, but in 1925 a later owner sold the house which became a diocesan centre for conferences and retreats. From 1939 to 1942 the Anglican Community of the Companions of Jesus the Good Shepherd ran a school in the building, but in 1943 it became the mother house of the order. The convent closed and in 1996 the house became a centre for meditation now known as Gaia House. The sisters' burial ground is in the south-east corner of the churchyard, whilst several members of the Taylor family have graves on the north side of the church, and Daniel Scratton and his wife lie buried close to the south wall of the chancel.

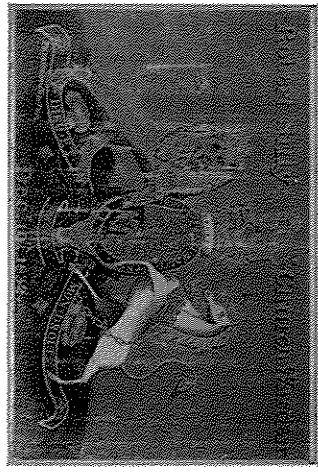


The CHURCH

Although its hilltop position may suggest an early site, the origins of the church are unknown, as is its dedication. The building is, however, a rarity in Devon in having largely escaped both late-medieval Perpendicular reconstruction and Victorian restoration. Fevner considered the church to be 'of exceptional interest in so far as it is essentially an unaltered building of c. 1300', and the Georgian fittings also represent a remarkable survival.

The building is constructed from various types of stone, including granite and so-called 'Ogwell marble', and is rendered externally. The cruciform arrangement of chancel, nave and transepts dates from the 13th century (if not earlier) to which was later added a plain, embattled west tower, a south porch and a 19th-century vesty on the north side of the nave. The Decorated east window, which has cusped intersecting tracery and an internal hood





Below left: The east window of the south transept (Christopher Dalton)

Left: Royal arms of William IV, dated 1832 (© Crown copyright: NMR.)

Below: Interior looking east by John Stabb, c.1900 (Courtesy of Devon County Library Service)

moulding terminating in a pair of carved heads, dates from the late 13th century, as do the other chancel windows and those in the north transept. The sedilia in the south chancel wall, with three trefoiled arches on cylindrical columns, also date from this period. The windows in the south transept have Perpendicular tracery and four-centred arches, but reused carved heads on one of the re-re-arches suggest that these windows replaced an earlier type. The west window is reminiscent of the east window but, if authentic, may have been reused, for the tower seems to be a later addition. Pevsner believed the tower to be part of the original church, but more recent estimates of its date vary between

c.1400 and the 16th century. The latter is suggested by the round-headed lights in the belfry windows, although these may represent alterations to the original structure.

The internal fittings include an octagonal wooden pulpit with early-17th-century mouldings (the panels were formerly painted with armorial bearings), an early-19th-century curved altar rail and high box pews in the nave and north transept. The pews date from c.1809, when the church was 'new seated throughout', and include hat-pegs beneath some of the seats and, in the north transept, a pair of low armrests, presumably for a child. The south transept formed a single family pew (presumably for the squire) in the 19th century, of which a fireplace and some wall panelling remain; it now contains a harmonium built by EA Marriot of Exeter, and the royal arms of William IV (formerly above the tower arch) dated 1832.

At the west end of the nave are rows of tiered seats, presumably for humbler parishioners or singers, and nearby is a font with an elongated bowl, described as 'modern' in 1840.



The church lacks nave windows and was described as 'dark and damp' in the 1790s, which may explain why, in a later description, almost the whole interior, including the seating, was painted uniformly white. When John Stabb photographed the interior c.1900, the wagon roof was still plastered, the Commandments, Lord's Prayer and Creed were displayed on

panels behind the communion table, there was a reading desk next to the pulpit, the altar rail was positioned further to the east, and box pews extended into the chancel. A 19th-century wall monument in the nave to Charlotte, wife of Pierce Joseph Taylor, has been dismantled and is currently in store in the tower.

CLERGY and PARISH

Documentary references to the church and its rectors date from the late 13th century; the period of some of the architectural features. Prior to the Reformation regular services for the dead (obits) were being paid for, but there is no evidence of a chantry priest at West Ogwell. Records of misdemeanours may not give a





BELLS AND PLATE

There are three bells. The treble has no inscription but is believed to be of similar date to the second bell which was cast in Exeter c.1400 and is inscribed 'JHEAARD' in Lombardic capitals. The third, cast at Exeter c.1450, is inscribed

THE AVE MARIA DEPICTED IN COLOUR

(‘With my lively voice I drive away all hurtful things’). The bells were rehung for chiming in 1930 by Gillett & Johnston of Croydon. Church plate listed in 1921 included a communion cup and cover made by John Jones of Exeter in 1576, an elaborately ornamented early-17th-century alms dish, and a paten bearing a coat of arms and an inscription indicating that it was the gift of Elizabeth Reynell (d.1701).

AMALGAMATION AND REDUNDANCY

Concern at the small population of this rural parish (only 50 in 1831), which limited the rector’s income, led to the benefice being united with that of East Ogwell in 1846. The first holder of the combined living was Fitzwilliam Taylor who remained rector until 1896. In 1981 West Ogwell church became redundant when the parishes of East and West Ogwell were united, and the building was vested in The Churches Conservation Trust in 1982. Repairs for the Trust have been carried out under the direction of John Schofield of Archtreacton, Bristol. These include the reconstruction of the roofs in 1994 during which time the plastered ceilings were removed, the re-rendering of the external walls

of the nave, chancel and transepts, glazing repairs, new drains and rainwater goods in 1996–97, and repairs to the chancel floor in 1999 during which a double grave was found.

SOURCES

Pevsner, N 1952. *The Buildings of England: Devon*, 1st edition, Harmondsworth, Penguin; Cherry, B and Pevsner, N 1989, 2nd edition. Gibson, B 1970. *The Story of West Ogwell House*. Raymond, L. Ms guide to West Ogwell Church. Sisters of the Community of the Companions of Jesus the Good Shepherd, 1968. West Ogwell Church (typescript). Notes on the church by J Davidson (1840), Sir Stephen Glynn (1845), and B Cresswell (1902/21). Articles by M Adams and N Orme, *Devonshire Association Transactions*, vols. 32 and 111. List of church plate, vol. 53. Kelly’s Directory 1866–1939. English Place-Name Society, 1932. *Place-Names of Devon Pt II*, Cambridge. Page, W (ed.) 1906. *Victoria History of the County of Devon*, London, Constable. Department of the Environment: descriptions of listed buildings. Bishops’ registers (printed). Diocesan and parochial records (Devon Record office). Patent rolls and other printed national records.

rebuilt in 1807, and after 1845 the rector lived at East Ogwell. A parish clerk who would have led the responses during services and a sexton are also referred to: in 1727 they were both appointed by the rector but paid by the parish, and in 1821 the sexton was paid by the squire ‘for keeping the Church yard neat’.

balanced picture of parish life, but they provide evidence that the parish lacked a book of homilies, marriage table and canons in 1674, a pulpit cushion in 1694 and a funeral bier in 1753. From at least the 17th century the rector occupied what is now Parsonage Farm, which was the rector’s glebe, but the house itself was

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.

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 it 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 some 340 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 www.visitchurches.org.uk.

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

MEMBER OF THE FOUNDATION OF
Holy Trinity, Torbryan
4 miles SW of Newton Abbot off A381

© The Churches Conservation Trust 2007

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The writer is grateful for the assistance of Paul Greener, Michael Laithewhite and the staff of the Devon Record Office and the West Country Studies Library.

Right: The octagonal wooden pulpit (© Crown copyright. NMR)

