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## **Tintinhull - St Margaret: Towards a structural history**

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### Introduction

This report on the fabric and documentary history of St Margaret's parish church, Tintinhull, has been prepared as an attempt to integrate what can be learned from the close examination of the fabric of the building with the surviving documents - particularly the early churchwardens' accounts beginning in 1433 - and to present the results as a continuous narrative from the pre-thirteenth century masonry of the nave wall bases to the present time. Tintinhull church is particularly rich in both of these resources: its fabric, unlike that of so many Somerset churches which were rebuilt from the wool revenues of the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, retains substantial evidence of each of the Gothic building styles; while its churchwardens' accounts detail expenditure on many of the fittings required for the performance of the late medieval liturgy, and provides dates for their acquisition or construction. Taking these two sources of information together allows the appearance of the church to be reconstructed in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and on the eve of the Reformation, when the building was probably at its most elaborate in terms of its internal furnishing and decoration.

The report owes its genesis to a request from Tintinhull Local History Group for a presentation on the history of the parish church, but in preparing the material for this lecture it soon became clear that much more information was available than could readily be distilled into a single hour. Indeed, merely to properly understand the fabric would need a programme of measured drawing which would require several weeks of work; while to fully exhaust the evidence of the medieval accounts represents a long term project of translation and interpretation which is only partially complete.

The author has had some experience in the archaeology of buildings, but has no specialist skills in documentary research and almost no Latin, therefore it is extremely probable that major errors in interpretation have been unwittingly incorporated. Nonetheless, it seems worthwhile to present the material gleaned thus far, if only as an interim report to be corrected and expanded as new material or the more accurate interpretation of it becomes available.

In order to extend the usefulness of the report aspects of the general historical background, particularly the way in which the Reformation and Civil War affected the use

and furnishing of the parish church, have been treated in more detail than would normally be the case. This, and the social context of the English parish church, can be explored further in Bettey 1979 or Strong 2007. Conversely, several aspects of the church have been treated in a relatively cursory fashion - in particular the monuments and the medieval bench ends - it is envisaged that these might form appendices or separate reports at some later date.

The evidence of the fabric: the middle ages

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The earliest fabric

Introduction

Whereas most of St Margaret's church, Tintinhull, is constructed in roughly squared and coursed Ham stone rubble, there are parts of the structure where different forms of fabric dominate. Some of the Ham stone walling appears to be of late, probably post-medieval date - particularly the upper parts of the north nave wall, the gables of the east and west walls (and possibly the south chancel wall) - and this makes it difficult to judge the date of some of the fabric stratigraphically. However, the stratigraphic relationships of the south nave wall suggest that fabric predating the thirteenth century rebuilding of the church may be preserved both here and in the base of the north nave wall.

The Lias Fabric

At the base of the nave walls there appear to be two (possibly successive) differences in the form of the fabric from that seen generally in the building. At the base of the wall Ham stone predominates, much of which shows signs of burning in the reddening of the surface, and this is so general as to suggest that a fire has affected the building at some time in the past, rather than it being the result of a succession of minor fires, such as might have accrued from a series of bonfires lit against the church walls by an over-enthusiastic groundsman. Above this, and rising to a height which appears to correspond to that of the internal sill-level string-course of the thirteenth century nave, the exterior fabric consists of blue lias rubble, except where this is punctuated by the buttresses on the north wall (probably rebuilt on their original sites), and by patches of Ham stone construction on the south wall (which probably mark the positions from which similar buttresses have been withdrawn).

Tintinhull's native geology is blue lias - as is shown by the discovery of the ichthyosaur in

the 1880s, at a depth of eight feet - and it is likely that this stone would be used for rubble work in preference to the more expensive Ham stone if money for the building programme were in short supply. Above this on the south wall the stonework is almost entirely of Ham stone (or one of the geologically similar local outcrops),<sup>1</sup> and the wall is crowned by the thirteenth century corbel table and an added fourteenth century parapet, suggesting that this is in situ masonry of mid-thirteenth century date, built up off the earlier lias fabric beneath. The consistency of the lias in the lower parts of the side walls of the nave shows that this is likely to be built fabric, rather than later patching in a cheaper stone; while its termination at the height of the stylistically thirteenth century fabric suggests that it preceded the rebuilding of that date.

Close analysis of the stonework surrounding the north door and the bases of the northern buttresses of the nave might provide evidence that these elements have been inserted into the lias fabric, and confirm its earlier date. For this the relationship of the lias to the north door would be the most critical, since there is a strong possibility that the buttressing was reconstructed when the north wall was rebuilt.

#### Evidence from the Victorian restoration

Writing after the 1884-5 restoration, when much of the fabric would have been exposed on the interior, and the exterior was also repaired and probably repointed, Rev. Hyson noted (in citing evidence for early fabric in the church),

‘...we may notice the composition of parts of the walls of the chancel of the church, where the masonry was of the most primitive kind possible, consisting, as it did, of daub and conglomerate of mud and stones, plastered inside and outside.’<sup>2</sup>

This fabric (if it still exists) is now so masked as to be unidentifiable, but its former presence seems to imply an earlier phase of construction for the chancel, and the description suggests that it was of a markedly different form (and therefore probably of a different date) to that of the nave.

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<sup>1</sup> It is known from the churchwardens’ accounts that stone was brought from Hardington for the porch in 1534-5.

<sup>2</sup> Hyson 1886, p.74.

### The thirteenth century building

Around the middle of the thirteenth century the whole of St Margaret's church was rebuilt, as a two-celled structure apparently on the pre-existing footprint of the nave and chancel. On the exterior, immediately beneath the eaves on the side walls of both nave and chancel, there exists a continuous moulded corbel table of earlier thirteenth century character, resembling that introduced c.1180 and continuing into the 1240s at Wells Cathedral, and that on Bishop Jocelin's range of the Bishop's Palace at Wells, probably of shortly after 1220. This corbel table forms the uppermost element of the plain, coursed and squared Hamstone rubble fabric, and must be presumed to date the masonry beneath it, since it is likely that if the latter had been rebuilt that the corbel table itself would have been dispensed with.

The windows of the chancel were remodelled at the beginning of the fourteenth century, so the only surviving example of the thirteenth century fenestration to remain untouched is the window at the east end of the north nave wall, where this was enclosed (and may have been blocked up) when the tower was added some decades later. Here the window opening consists of a tall lancet with a slightly depressed trefoiled head, with deeply splayed jambs and freestanding Ham stone shafts in the interior angles, rising from water-holding bases and having plain moulded capitals supporting a rere-arch in two stones. The base of its western jamb has been raised to accommodate the inserted door to the chamber in the tower base, and its eastern jamb has been absorbed into the thickness of the later chancel arch. Around the rere-arch is a projecting hood-mould which terminates above the abacus to the west, and which was evidently left projecting after the window was enclosed by the tower - suggesting that the window may have been left visible - either left open to provide borrowed light to the tower base, or with its opening blocked and the recess used for a separate purpose, such as housing an image. Beneath the sill of this window a 4" roll moulding forms part of the continuous string-course which runs right around the nave and chancel, rising above the doors, and now being interrupted only on the east wall of the chancel and around the renewed west door.

It is likely that the hood-moulding around the window heads was also continued as a horizontal string-course between the windows, since there is a surviving length of it in the north-western corner of the chancel, running up to the western springing of the western window of the north wall, where it terminates against the rere-arch - although the section of its riser where it turned upwards to follow the line of the arch still exists. It is probable that the remainder of this string-course was excised when the chancel was remodelled, and the complete refenestration of the rest of the nave in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries would have removed it here.

Continuous string-courses at sill-level and window-head springing level were characteristic of Early English architecture, and it seems likely that something similar existed on the

exterior also. The fourteenth century remodelling of the church may have removed these features on the exterior as well, but (if the south wall of the chancel is original)<sup>3</sup> there may be traces of the springing-level string-course, since the side windows have projecting hood moulds terminating in square horizontal labels, perhaps originally forming a continuous string-course at the level of the base of the upper weatherings of the buttresses, since the wall-course on which they align is continuous and of roughly the right bed depth.

Although heavily remodelled (and perhaps partly rebuilt) in the fourteenth century, the inner elevations of the chancel windows to north and south retain much of their thirteenth century form, their early jambs and re-arches ostensibly complete, with relatively shallow coursing, water-holding bases, freestanding Ham stone shafts and moulded bell-capitals. The east window is a nineteenth century replacement of a Decorated (or later) window, and no trace of the Early English window (or, indeed, of the string-courses or mouldings which framed it) survives. It presumably consisted of a series of grouped lancets rising to a taller central light, like those at Martock or Isle Abbots.

Also of the mid thirteenth century is the double piscina in the wall of the south side of the sanctuary. Although heavily restored and partly rebuilt it is clearly contemporary with the Early English work elsewhere in the church, with bell-capitals and water-holding bases. Here, the freestanding shafts are of blue lias, and may preserve the sole survival of a deliberate use of colour-contrasting stones which was a hall-mark of the Early English style, deriving from Henry of Blois' use of Purbeck marble for colour-contrasting shafts at Wolvesey Palace in Winchester between 1141 and 1154; the practice was introduced in Somerset in 1184-7 in the rebuilding of the Lady Chapel at Glastonbury Abbey (where Henry of Blois had been abbot) and where the shafts, bases, capitals and annuli were cut from blue lias. At Wells Cathedral the north doorway of the north porch (before 1208) originally had lias shafts (the last one removed in the 1950s), though those of the interior of the porch were of Doulling; the west front, however, employed blue lias for all its shafts, abaci, and two of the main string-courses (c.1220-50). From around 1300 Purbeck marble was generally substituted for blue lias in Somerset.<sup>4</sup> If the shafts of the piscina are original (or reproduce the original arrangement) then their presence could point to the former use of lias for the main shafts of the windows at this date.

Also providing useful dating evidence is the presence of dog-tooth moulding on the angles of the jambs of the piscina. At Wells Cathedral this motif is only introduced in the heads of the west windows, built shortly before the dedication in 1239, but it is found extensively

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<sup>3</sup> The church guide (Bailey and Hyson et al, 1995) states that the south wall of the chancel was rebuilt in the 1884-6 restoration - though this may be a conflation of the rebuilding of the north nave wall.

<sup>4</sup> See Donovan and Reid (1963) for Somerset examples, and Zarnecki (1986) for Henry of Blois as originator of the practice.

in stone probably reused from the demolished west cloister of after 1240 - suggesting a date for the work at Tintinhull in the 1240s.

#### The relationship of the nave and chancel in the thirteenth century

The relationship of the nave and chancel is of particular interest, since it appears to imply that the thirteenth century church had no chancel arch. Observed in the Victoria County History,

‘The original early-13th-century building was not divided by a chancel arch, a fact demonstrated by the rollmoulded string-course surviving almost continuously around the whole structure and rising to form hood-moulds above doors and other original openings; and by the common width of the present chancel and nave.’

this observation was subsequently elaborated by the same author,

‘The building is a rarity in the West of England, common enough in the east: in origin an early thirteenth-century church undivided by a chancel arch. The obvious clues are the roll-moulded string course around the inside of the building and the common width of chancel and nave. Where the design came from is an unanswerable question but surely not unconnected with the fact that the church belonged to the priory of Montacute and Montacute in its turn was part of the international family of Cluny.’<sup>5</sup>

It is not only the continuous string-course at sill level which suggests this arrangement, it is also demonstrated by the alignment of the window jambs across the church at the junction of nave and chancel. The line of the existing fourteenth century chancel arch has its east face hard against the western jamb of the south chancel window, and at its northern side its western face actually absorbs the eastern jamb of the sole surviving thirteenth century window of the north elevation of the nave, to the extent that the whole of its eastern shaft, almost to the western face of the bell of the capital, is concealed by the masonry of the chancel arch. This would imply that some 25 cm of the window fabric is currently concealed by an arch-wall 65 cm thick - meaning that any thirteenth century chancel arch could have been no more than 36 cm thick.

It is also of note, however, that the surviving length of springer-level string-course in the

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<sup>5</sup> Dunning 1996, p.72.

chancel is set at a slightly higher level than the line of the springing of the window in the nave, which suggests some visual break between nave and chancel - perhaps in the form of an earlier, thinner stone chancel arch or screen structure. There also appears to be a mismatch in the level of the 4" roll moulding from chancel to nave, further suggesting some form of visual break at the line of the junction of nave and chancel - indeed, the relative heights are inconsistent, with the north wall of the nave having its roll slightly lower than that in the chancel; but the south wall of the nave having the roll slightly higher. It seems very likely that this mismatch was masked in the original building, otherwise the levels could have been matched more accurately.

#### The north tower

The lower three of the four main registers of the tower, together with the angle buttresses at the northern quoins, belong to the late Early English style, and probably represent the full height of the later thirteenth century tower. That this structure post-dates the rebuilding / remodelling of the nave in the mid thirteenth century is clearly demonstrated by the way in which it encloses and blocks the eastern window of the north nave wall, and also cuts through the corbel table of the external north nave elevation, three of whose corbels are enclosed within the base of the tower. The junction between the eastern voussoirs of the super-arch of the tower doorway and the western jamb of the nave window on the north elevation of the nave indicates that the former has been cut into the latter. The south wall of the tower is corbelled southwards off the pre-existing north nave wall.

Stylistic differences also serve to separate the tower from the slightly earlier style of the nave: the early thirteenth century corbel table is absent from the tower; the form of the windows in the tower base is different from those of the nave, having an internal trefoil head, but again (as with the nave windows) cut in two stones; the tall lancets of the original belfry stage lack cusps altogether.

There is a clear interface between the early fabric of the lower three storeys and both the northern stair turret and the upper storey which, according to the testimony of the churchwardens' accounts, were added in 1516-17. The early fabric of the tower (like the west wall of the nave and the east wall of the chancel) is of coursed Ham stone rubble, while the added elements are of squared Ham stone ashlar of a slightly darker colour. The demi-octagonal stair turret cuts through the semi-circular string-courses of the earlier tower, and its own strings are of later form. The early sixteenth century upper stage of the tower has cusped lancets, while the lancet openings of the later thirteenth century stage beneath are more acutely pointed and lack cusps. These lower lancets have had open tracery panels matching those of the top storey inserted (but on the south elevation the paired lancets are blocked). In the tower base it must be assumed that a third window

originally existed on the north elevation, which was abolished with the insertion of the turret stair (is there any trace of it in the staircase?), and at which time the existing early sixteenth century four-centred headed door was inserted at the centre of the north wall, thus forming the original access to the tower stair (only subsequently superseded by the external entrance in the eighteenth or early nineteenth century).

Prior to the creation of the early sixteenth century stair access to the upper storeys of the tower must have been by ladders, and this assumption is endorsed by an entry in the churchwardens' accounts in 1439-40 '*pro scala xiiij rongarum empta pro le belfray....xxd.*' - a thirteen rung ladder bought for the belfry.

The darker coloured stonework of the added upper storey appears to start immediately above the narrow band which separates the two upper stages, suggesting that the early sixteenth century builders have retained the old parapet in their new storey - the parapet itself possibly contemporary with the late fourteenth century parapet of the nave, and lacking the Early English corbel table. Immediately below the interface with the new work the top of the 'parapet' has been cut on its eastern and western sides by three square recesses, probably the seatings for the putlogs supporting the cantilevered scaffolding off which the upper storey was constructed.

The thirteenth century angle buttresses, now somewhat dwarfed by the full height of the extended tower, would have appeared much more in proportion before the addition of the upper storey, occupying just over half the height of the original building.

The former existence of an altar in the tower base can be assumed from the presence of a squint in the south-eastern corner, which provides a view of the high altar from a position near the west wall of the tower base. This is now boxed in and obscured so that its precise orientation is difficult to judge. The tower base is too confined to have functioned as more than a chantry chapel. The mouldings of the roof would appear to be roughly contemporary with the erection of the upper storey; most of its timber (apart from the boarding) appearing to be relatively early. The ceiling beams are supported at their intersections against the wall on plain Hamstone corbels.<sup>6</sup>

The doorway between the nave and the chamber in the tower base was inserted when the tower was constructed, raising the western base of the adjacent nave window, and diverting the continuous sill-level string-course around its head. The care taken to alter the earlier window shows that it was not simply blocked up when the tower was erected.

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<sup>6</sup> The north-western corner of the structure is chamfered off internally - why?

### The fourteenth century remodelling

Whereas the thirteenth century reconstruction of the church appears to have seen the nave and chancel rebuilt together, the fourteenth century campaign suggests that these two main elements of the church were remodelled as separate projects, the chancel first around 1320 (and probably at the expense of the Priory of Montacute), and the nave later in the century in a distinctly different style (presumably at the expense of the parish).

The remodelling of the chancel included the insertion of Decorated tracery in the side windows and the creation of the existing chancel arch; it may also have involved the renewal of the east window, and possibly the wholesale rebuilding of the east wall. Both the east wall of the chancel and the west wall of the nave resemble the fabric of the lower storeys of the tower in being constructed from less well finished Ham stone rubble than the earlier thirteenth century walls of the nave and chancel, but this is insufficient on its own to make a definitive identification of the fabric as being of later construction. Buckler's drawing of 1835 shows a five light east window with reticulated tracery, which certainly suggests an earlier fourteenth century window, though Glynne (writing before 1840) calls the window '*bad and modern*' - could it have been renewed after it was drawn by Buckler, but before Glynne saw it?

The chancel's new two-light windows with quatrefoil heads are likely to have been considerably wider than the original lancet windows which they replaced, but it is clear that the internal rere-arches with their freestanding shafts, bases and moulded capitals are those of the Early English openings. On the exterior the thirteenth century window heads may have been adapted (rather than replaced) when the Decorated tracery was inserted in the fourteenth century, since the moulding has been faded into the tops of the plain chamfers of the jambs - but if so the original windows would have had to have been considerably wider than those of the nave.

On the interior the chancel window heads, and particularly the hood-moulds which surround them, are flattened to the extent that they are almost semi-circular - a feature which has led some commentators to suggest that they incorporate much earlier Transitional masonry. Unlike the Early English nave window their heads are in three stones, rather than two, and unlike the 4 foot wide nave window they are 5 feet wide to the centres of the flanking shafts. Could these windows have been cannibalised and re-erected to a wider pattern? - since the keystones of their arch-construction could be fillers to make up the gap at the centre, if one or both jambs had been moved outwards.

The chancel arch is supported on foliate capitals set on short shafts rising off head corbels, that to the north of a king, that to the south of a bishop. The hood moulds of the arch to east and west terminate in head stops: a king and a woman in a wimple facing

west; a priest in a high-collared amice and a clean-shaven male in a loose fitting cap facing east - the position of the priestly head perhaps emphasising the division of the chancel from the more secular space of the nave. Stylistically the head of the bishop resembles that of the effigy of William de Marchia (d.1308) at Wells Cathedral; while that of the female head-stop on the west side of the arch is similar to the brasses of Margaret Camoys at Trotton (Sussex) and Joan de Cobham at Cobham (Kent), both c.1320, suggesting a date in the first quarter of the fourteenth century for the remodelling of the arch (and, by extension, of the chancel).

In the nave much of the fourteenth century remodelling has probably been masked by later alterations, the main survival from this period being the tall, square-headed, two-light window at the west end of the south elevation. This window, of unusual form, appears to have been inserted into the thirteenth century walling, there being little relationship between the positions of its quoin stones and the surrounding coursing of the rubble fabric of the wall. To the east, the next bay is occupied by the thirteenth century south door and its later porch, and in the next bay to the east a three-light Perpendicular window of conventional form has been inserted; however, above the western side of this window is an area of disruption in the masonry which includes a Ham stone block set on end and a narrow horizontal stone running east from its apex. These two stones frame an area of disruption immediately above the later window, and the vertical block appears to bear coarse tooling suggesting that a projecting element has been trimmed off. Comparison with the window in the west bay suggests that this is the remnant of the western and upper hood-mould blocks of a square-headed two light window of the same design, slighted when the Perpendicular window was created, and it is likely that a third window of this form originally existed in the eastern bay also, but that this has been entirely removed when the larger Perpendicular window was inserted here in the fifteenth century.

Whether similar windows ever existed in the north wall of the nave cannot now be known, the upper parts of this elevation having been rebuilt.

The form of these windows - tall and narrow like the thirteenth century lancet openings - suggests the possibility that they perpetuated the form, position, and possibly also some of the masonry, from the thirteenth century windows.

At the apex of the side walls of the nave the corbel table is surmounted by a plain parapet with gargoyles feeding the existing down-pipes. The gargoyle to the east of the south porch consists of a head wearing a square head-dress, which appears to be a stylised version of the crespine, generally worn around 1370-1390,<sup>7</sup> and suggesting a date for the addition of the parapet (and probably for the refenestration and general repair of the nave) towards the end of the fourteenth century - fifty years or so after the remodelling of the

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<sup>7</sup> A similar feature is found on the tower at High Ham.

chancel.

#### An obsession with time

The south buttresses of the chancel retain no less than five (possibly six) 'scratch' dials, one placed very high, but apparently in situ (is there a lost feature which would have allowed it to be used? or was it supplied with a fixed gnomon, allowing it to be read from the ground?). Horne located four dials in 1915 - three on the chancel (one on each buttress), and one on the east side of the south porch, omitting the upper one on the south-east buttress and one of the pair on the next buttress from the east. He notes that from the dial on the latter buttress '*the end of the wooden style peg was extracted*'.<sup>8</sup>

The purchase of a clock prior to 1433 suggests that these dials would have gone out of use in the fifteenth century, when the mechanical ringing of the hours would have supplanted their function. Regular payments for items associated with the clock occur throughout the period covered by the churchwardens' accounts: as in oil bought in 1434-5 and the following year, cord in 1437-8, repairs in 1438-9, and payments to its custodian (Stephen Baker in 1439-40 and 1450-1, John Strecche in 1451-2, both being paid the fee of 3/4d). In 1541-2 the accounts record a payment of 33/4d. '*for our new clocke this year bought*'.

Clocks in Somerset (other than that at Wells cathedral) are also referred to in the fifteenth century at Croscombe (in 1484: a payment to the clock keeper of 4s.) and at St Michael's Bath (1434: *pro una corda emptā ad peyse orlagij, xix d.*).

Beeson (1971), addressing the issue of how common clocks were in the later middle ages, says,

'The Rev. J.C. Cox an authority on English churchwardens' accounts writing in 1913, went so far as to state "there was hardly a clockless church to be found in either town or country in the fifteenth century". This assumption is not endorsed statistically. The clocks actually known to have existed in the 14th and 15th centuries as enumerated above amount to less than one hundred. There is no documentary evidence for those that may have disappeared.'<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Horne 1917, p.87.

<sup>9</sup> Beeson 1971, p.24.

### Fifteenth century alterations in the nave

The remainder of the fenestration of the nave is Perpendicular in style, with a pair of three light windows in the second bay from the east, a larger three light window in the south wall of the east bay, and a four light window with subdivided tracery at the west end. The creation of all four of these windows could fall within the period covered by the churchwardens' accounts, but only the west window appears to have an entry which can definitely be associated with it, so they may have been largely the subject of individual bequests or gifts, rather than having been paid for from the common funds. While the smaller windows of the second bay are fairly conventional in form and size, it is likely that the larger eastern window was provided to admit more light for the eastern end of the nave, perhaps because of the partial blocking of the chancel arch by the screen, loft and tympanum.

The payment of 6s. in 1463-4 for taking the glass out of the west window<sup>10</sup> probably marks the point at which the alteration to this part of the fenestration took place, and may also date the insertion of the eastern window. The insertion of this window near the rood screen probably also removed the buttress which originally separated the eastern two bays of the elevation, and which is now visible as an ashlar patch bounded by the early *lias* fabric at the base of the wall. The removal of this buttress may have been accompanied by the creation of a substitute at the south-eastern corner of the nave, since the buttress here is of fifteenth century form.

The south porch is also an addition to the fabric of the nave, apparently reaching its final form only in the seventeenth century. In 1534-5 there were payments for the repair of the roof of the porch, and the purchase of stone from Hardington for repairs. In 1634-5 substantial rebuilding appears to have taken place, and a stone with an inscription bearing the date 1634 exists in the gable.<sup>11</sup> It is noteworthy that the burning of the Ham stone at the base of the wall extends onto the side walls of the porch, but is absent from its south elevation, suggesting that the whole of the latter may have been renewed at this time.

This fire, which appears to have affected the fabric of the nave and the tower, but apparently not that of the chancel, seems likely to have occurred in the fifteenth century, since it has marked the stone beneath the south-eastern nave window which probably represents the withdrawal of the earlier medieval buttress when the window above was inserted. It is present on the later thirteenth century plinth of the tower, but is not on the

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<sup>10</sup> Solut. uno homini locato ad deponendum vitrum de fenestra ecclesie ad finem occidentalem

<sup>11</sup> Transcribed in Rosbottom 1989.

adjacent plinth of the added stair turret of 1516-17 - showing that it must have occurred prior to the second decade of the sixteenth century. Indeed, any fire causing enough damage to have marked the circuit of the nave and tower walls would certainly have precipitated major expenditure in the churchwardens' accounts, and it must therefore have occurred prior to their commencement in 1433. Since there are no payments for the making of the Perpendicular fenestration of the nave detailed in the accounts it may be that these windows were inserted at some date during the first three decades of the fifteenth century, and that the fire occurred soon after this, and prior to 1433.

It is tempting to associate the fire with the burning of a thatched roof, the thatch having been raked off the roof and left to burn at the foot of the walls,<sup>12</sup> but by this period it is likely that the church had a leaded roof (since the sale of old lead from the church is recorded in 1444-5).

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<sup>12</sup> Cf., for instance, Pilton tithe barn, where, on the evening of Sunday 22 June 1963, the building was struck by lightning. The thatch and roof structure were destroyed and such fragments of the roof frame that survived the inferno were put to bonfires which were reported to have burnt for weeks. The lower parts of the Doultling stone walls were burnt cherry red.

The evidence of the churchwardens' accounts for the late medieval church

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## Introduction

The survival of the churchwardens' accounts from 1433 into the seventeenth century provides a rare insight into the furnishing, maintenance and repair of the parish church. Partly published in the late nineteenth century by Bishop Hobhouse, and now being translated by the Tintinhull Local History Group, these accounts are not as complete as those of Morebath, made famous by Eamon Duffy, but, by providing evidence for a series of expenses on the fabric and fittings of St Margaret's church, they allow at least a partial reconstruction of its appearance at the end of the middle ages.

Much remains to be done before the churchwardens' accounts can be fully analysed, and much of what follows is based on partial translations of partial transcriptions. Bishop Hobhouse's transcript took only those parts of the accounts which appeared interesting to him, and left out repetitive elements, so that it is unclear from his publication how much was being spent each year on candles, for instance. The modern translations, while working with the whole text, are still only partly complete - so that neither source contains the 1510-11 accounts for the making of the nave benches, for instance. The present author's Latin is insufficient to the task, but it is clear that further references to the alabaster retable, for instance, are still to be translated.

## Making the new rood-loft

In 1451-2 the churchwardens paid a total of £2 13s 11d for a new roodloft to stand over the screen which spanned the chancel arch between nave and chancel.

There is no direct evidence as to why the loft needed replacing, but it is clear that an earlier loft had existed, since 'diverse men' were paid a total of 1/6d to take it down, and 2/10d was received by the wardens for the sale of its components,

And of 4d. received of Robert Aught for 2 wood boards thus sold to him.  
And of 2d. received of John Trente for 1 book [?wooden] beam sold to him.  
And of 6d. received of William Wywmen for 1 oak board thus sold.

And of 18d. received of John Gille and William Tappe for 2 boards of oak called "liernes" of the old rood loft and thus sold.

And of 4d. received of Robert Sherene for 6 wooden joists thus sold to him.

The use of the term 'liernes' suggests that the two boards purchased by John Gille and William Tappe were the vaulted soffit of the loft, rising beneath the structure to east and west of the traceried openings of the screen (their high price also suggesting that they were one of the carved elements of the loft). John Trente appears to have purchased the main bresummer beam which supported the structure, and Robert Sherene the transverse joists which rested on it and on the outer edges of the vaulted soffit, and in turn supported the floor. That only three other boards from the superstructure were saleable in turn suggests that the upper parts of the loft may have been damaged or decayed. Six joists suggest the presence of five openings in the screen beneath - two traceried openings to either side of the central (double) doorway - suggesting that the central opening in the stone wall-base of the screen may have been slightly enlarged at a later date.

The principal contractor for the new loft appears to have been the carpenter Thomas Dayfote, whose workshop was elsewhere, since William Golyght (a local man) was paid 4d. *'for bringing Thomas Dayfote to raise the rood loft's solarium above the location there'*. Dayfote appears to have been based at Montacute, and may have been attached to the Priory; certainly Montacute Priory provided some of the materials for the work, since Dayfote's payment is for *'building "le rodelofte" out of oak boards from the convent'*.<sup>13</sup> A further 8d. was paid *'in expenses for diverse men to bring 2 wagons of wood from Montacute to Tintinhull'* - perhaps the transportation of the finished structure as unassembled components ready to be made up on site.<sup>14</sup>

If Dayfote's Montacute workshop was responsible for the manufacture of the loft itself, then John Brayne of Stoke seems to have been the builder and carpenter responsible for the more general work on site during the alterations. Brayne employed a 'servant', John Davy, who may be the same man who was paid 20d. in 1435-6 for *'making a wall around the cemetery'*, and if so this could indicate a long association of Brayne and Davy with the church in Tintinhull, perhaps as their regular maintenance builders. Davy was evidently both mason and carpenter, since he was responsible *'for mending the stone wall by the north part of "le rodelofte" with 2d paid for his food'* for a total payment of 5d.; while Brayne and 'his servant' (presumably Davy) were also paid 10d. *'for 1 day for boarding and*

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<sup>13</sup> Provision of materials by the Priory may have substantially reduced the cost of the work, since at St Mary-le-Hill in London in 1496 the new roodloft cost £7 - though here several 'karvers' were employed 'for makying of the fygyrres'. [Bettey 1979, p.42].

<sup>14</sup> It would have been normal practice to frame up the structure at the workshop to make sure everything fitted properly, then number the components, break it down again and transport it in 'flat-pack' form for assembly on site.

*mending the partition between [?behind] the cross being between the nave of the church and the chancel' - evidently making good between the base of the tympanum in the head of the arch and the top of the new loft. Brayne also supplied timber for the work, being paid 6/8d 'for wood called "waynscote" for said "rodelofte" made by him bought in gross' - perhaps the planking for the floor of the loft.*

Before the new structure was erected repairs were made to the walls where the old loft had been taken out. John Davy may not have been sufficiently skilled to cut moulded freestone, since the churchwardens employed 'Henry Mason of Odcombe and Thomas Bouryng<sup>15</sup> there for mending defects in the stone wall on the other parts of the church being holes where the rood loft was previously located there', paying 7d. for the work, and paying a shilling to 'John Stibi for free stone for said "rodeloft" bought from him'. The two inserted stones in the western angles of the chancel arch may well be the stones bought from Stibi and cut and fixed by Henry Mason and Thomas Bouryng in 1451.

Fixing the new structure involved the use of '*nails and certain fasteners for said "rodeloft" bought this year*' for the sum of 8d. As part of the campaign William Porys was paid 10d. for the obscure task of '*making 9 new Judas boards for the light beam standing before the cross location there*'.<sup>16</sup> Evidently this must refer to a structure of some sort, probably fixed to the rood beam or the front of the loft, to support lights burning before the rood in addition to those of the trendell, the circular candle-holder suspended before the rood, which receives regular mention in the churchwardens' accounts.<sup>17</sup> This was part of the system of lights burned throughout the church,

'Every church in England had many lights - they burnt before the great Rood, before the Sacrament, before each of the images in the church. In addition, extra lights were lit during the canon of the Mass, and annually dozens of lights were set round the Easter sepulchre in which the

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<sup>15</sup> Thomas Bouryng, with John Gille (who bought lumber from the old roodloft) were amongst the five men who donated 6/8d. from '*the profits of 1 play called "Cristmassepley"*' in the same year (see also REED 1996).

<sup>16</sup> Hobhouse gives the number as 40 (xl) - a misreading of xi for xl in the original is possible, but why 9 (ix)? Rosbottom gives the word as 'Indaces' and translates it as '*pieces of wood which were connected with uprights*'.

<sup>17</sup> Vallance 1936, p.4, says, '*There was also a variety of different kinds of lights to hang before the rood - lamps, branches, candelabra, coils of wax and wheels called Trendylls...or Rowells.... All such lights would be suspended by cords or chains from the roof near the east end of the nave*', and quotes instances of surviving pulley wheels for their suspension.

Sacrament was reserved from Good Friday till Easter Day.<sup>18</sup>

Regular purchases of wax, resin and 'matchyerne' (wick) by the Tintinhull churchwardens illustrate the requirements of the parish for candles.

One aspect of the work in 1451-2 which can be inferred from the accounts is that, since there are no payments for new figures for the rood itself, the old carvings, like the screen beneath (probably all dating from the fourteenth century insertion of the chancel arch), were retained - though whether this was out of a desire to save money, or out of reverence for the hallowed images cannot now be known.

One entry in the accounts also points to the retention of the tympanum which formed the backdrop to the rood:

And paid to John Brayne with his servant there for 1 day for boarding and mending the partition between [?behind] the cross being between the nave of the church and the chancel – 10d.

The fourteenth century chancel arch of Tintinhull church is tall and wide, leaving only a relatively narrow area of walling around its head - an area altogether too small for a major painting like the 'Doom'. It is entirely probable that the arch head was filled with a boarded partition supported off the back of the rood-loft and painted with a representation of the Last Judgement. The payment to John Brayne and John Davy (his servant) is evidently for patching up the gaps at the base where the new loft had been fitted, rather than for redecoration of the tympanum, and again it would appear that the whole ensemble of rood figures and tympanum was retained intact above the new roofloft. Such tympana were often overpainted with the royal arms at the Reformation, and remained in position until later restorations swept them away, very occasionally being retained with their paintings rediscovered at a time when they were sufficiently appreciated to be saved from destruction.

It was not for another seven years, in 1459-60, that the churchwardens paid for the painting of the roodloft - *It. uno peynter pro peyntyng de la Rodelofte ut in parte pecunie sue.... xiijs. iiijd.* - the considerable cost (representing one seventh of the total cost of the loft in 1451) probably indicating a high degree of decoration, possibly including figure painting. Indeed, this may not have been the full cost of the work, since an entry in 1462-3 records a further 1/8, '*allowed to J. Bole - the sum which he had laid out for the painting of the Rood-loft*'.

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<sup>18</sup> Duffy 1992, p.146-7.

Even later, work was put in hand to improve the setting of the rood itself. Throughout the later middle ages, the high cross standing on a beam above the roodloft, was the dominant image in the nave, flanked by the figures of the Blessed Virgin to the north and St John the Evangelist to the south. The position of the rood beam can be inferred from the symmetrical pair of inserted Ham stone repairs in the face of the springers of the chancel arch to either side just to the west of the centre-line of the arch. Between 1473 and 1476 the wardens paid 2/7d '*pro factura de le bemme crucis*' - 'for the making of the rood beam' - 1476 also being the date of the construction of High Ham church where the rood beam still survives intact above the chancel arch. Here, there remains a moulded horizontal beam with paterae in its hollow which match those of the original roofs above, and Bond and Camm's account confirms that this is the rood beam, the authors noting that the stumps of the pedestals for the rood and its attendant figures 'can still be discovered' on its top surface.

In the 1480s the churchwardens paid out considerable sums for the improvement of the setting and decoration of the rood. It was normal for the eastern bay of the nave roof to be more richly decorated in order to provide a canopy of honour to the rood, sometimes with an independent projecting canopy fixed to the wall of the chancel arch substituting for, or being made in addition to this. This 'ceilure' appears to be the subject of a considerable payment of 24 shillings in 1482-3 '*Pro celatione Alti crucis*', and in the same year a further repair to the rood beam '*et pro facture le mortyse ad deponendum lignis intus [for the erection of the upright beam of the Crucifix]*', cost a mere 2d.

After this, and some time before the next dated account in 1497, there were two payments for work to the 'cylyng' of the church (totalling 17/9d), and for painting the high cross and the ceilure above it (£4 7s 6d).<sup>19</sup>

#### Images, altars and lights

The churchwardens' accounts, together with the will of John Stone and the evidence of the physical fabric of the church, are our main source for the disposition of the altars in St Margaret's church.

In 1416 John Stone left in his will 20s '*to the fraternity of the light (luminis) of the Blessed Mary in the said church [of Tintinhull]*'. In 1437-8 the churchwardens received 6/8d. from William Panday from the goods [of the brotherhood] of St Mary [*de bonis S. Marie*], and in 1444-5 the Warden of the brotherhood of St Mary gave the proceeds of the sale of

<sup>19</sup> It. pro pictura alti crucis.... vjs. vijd.  
It. pro pictatione alti crucis et pro cilatione supra.... £iiij xld.

100lbs. of old lead from the church to the churchwardens. This brotherhood would have been responsible for the maintenance of the Lady altar, its lights and ornaments.

The Lady altar was a separate site from the High Altar, which would have been dedicated to the church's patron saint, St Margaret. The accounts refer in addition to '*Seynt Nicholas awter*' in 1516-17, and to another altar for which a retable was painted in 1514-15 as the '*Altaris ex parte australi*', in the southern part. In 1515-16 and the following year there are references to the 'low altars', as distinct from the High Altar.

It is evident from the survival of a piscina in situ in the south end of the northern wall-base of the rood screen, and of a squint providing a view of the high altar from the chamber in the base of the tower, that there were altars against the east wall of the tower chamber and against the north side of the screen, and the reference to an altar *in the southern part* shows that the latter was one of a pair against the base of the rood screen - giving a minimum of four altars in the building. Bligh Bond suggested that the presence of the bracket beneath the window on the north wall indicated the position of a fifth altar, which he identified with that of St. Nicholas.<sup>20</sup>

References to images other than the High Cross are rare in the Tintinhull churchwardens' accounts, the only one which is clearly identified being a figure of the Blessed Virgin Mary to which a '*linthiament*' was given by Alice Stacey in 1503-4. In 1510-11 a niche was being made for this or another sculpture of the Virgin Mary, the churchwardens recording an expense of 3/4d. '*in partte of payment for howsing of owr lady*'.

An image of the Virgin Mary would probably have been a standard possession of the church from the time of its thirteenth century rebuilding onwards, and the one(s) referred to in the early sixteenth century documents could have been associated with either the Lady altar or the High Altar. Paired niches or brackets for images on the east wall behind the high altar were a customary fitting in the later medieval parish church and were generally intended to house the images of the patron saint of the church, i.e., St Margaret (to the north), and the Blessed Virgin (to the south)<sup>21</sup>,

'The altar in a Christian church was the earthly representative of the throne of God. And as the right was the place of honour ("Sit thou on my right

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<sup>20</sup> Bond 1910, p.73.

<sup>21</sup> '...by the early thirteenth century images of Our Lady were common in parish churches and by the 1240s were becoming *de rigueur*. No longer was it customary for the image to be placed on, above or behind the altar, but at the side of it - to the north if it was the patronal image, to the south if she was not the titular saint of the church. This is not made explicit in the episcopal documents of the period, but the arrangement was functioning in 1240 at St Peter ad Vincula in the Tower of London...' Marks 2004, p.61.

hand," etc.), it followed that the north of the altar was the more honourable position.... That being so, it follows that the normal position for the image of the patron saint of a church, or the representative of the like, was at the north end of the altar.<sup>122</sup>

These two sculptures, of the major saintly intercessors of the parish, flanked the altar and the retable or reredos which stood upon or behind it, further embellished with figures of the saints and often with a scene of the crucifixion at its centre. Such images were central to the religious experience of the medieval parishioners, particularly in the fifteenth and early sixteenth century,

'The cult of saints, according to Emile Mâle, "sheds over all the centuries of the Middle Ages its poetic enchantment", but "it may well be that the saints were never better loved than during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries". Certainly reminders of them were everywhere in late medieval England... Their images filled the churches, gazing down in polychrome glory from altar-piece and bracket, from windows and niches.'<sup>23</sup>

Paired niches, hacked back flush with the face of the east wall of the chancel, and flanking the damaged frame of a reredos, can be seen at Chelvey; a single similarly damaged niche to the north of the altar remains at High Ham; but at North Cadbury both niches together with their projecting canopies and brackets survive complete. Recent work (2008) on the east wall at Podimore exposed the blocked and damaged pair of fourteenth century niches flanking the high altar; while at Stocklynch St Mary Magdalene their place appears to have been served by wall paintings. At Tintinhull there is no direct evidence for the presence of niches to either side of the altar, nor any record of their former existence; the documentary references are inconclusive, but it seems unlikely that if the Lady altar were one of the pair in front of the screen that a new niche could have been accommodated there - the south side of the high altar may therefore remain a possible candidate for its site.

#### Adorning the altars - the retables

In 1446-7 the churchwardens paid £1 6s 8d '*pro una tabula de alabastro empta ad summum altare ecclesie ibidem*', together with a separate payment of 10s. '*ad ij tabula*

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<sup>22</sup> Bond 1916, p.26.

<sup>23</sup> Duffy 1992, p. 155, quoting Mâle, '*Religious Art in France: The Late Middle Ages*', 1986, p.147.

*de alabastro empta per parochianos*' - apparently an independent purchase for which they had not been reimbursed. These, and a small slab of alabaster worth 1d., were apparently purchased from 'a certain man called "alabaster man"', suggesting that the parish may have been dealing with a specialist tradesman or merchant, perhaps an entrepreneur importing finished items from the workshops in Nottingham. 'Alabasterman' was also the title used by the image-makers themselves, and it is therefore possible that the parish were negotiating with a carving workshop based more locally, since,

'While Nottingham appears to have been the major centre, various references indicate that alabaster was also worked elsewhere: at Chellaston, Burton-on-Trent and Coventry. It was evidently also worked further afield, at York, London and Lincoln, and with less likelihood at Norwich and Bristol.'<sup>24</sup>

By the second half of the fifteenth century the evidence of contemporary valuations suggests that,

'Altarpieces were worth £1 to £1 10s (£1.50p) each, indicating how commonplace carving in alabaster had now become, brought about doubtless by systematic production using standard designs on a larger scale, with presumably a number of workshops competing against each other and undercutting prices.... at £1 or just over for a complete altarpiece, presumably including the painted wooden framework, the popularity of the alabaster altarpiece at home and abroad in the fifteenth century is not surprising.'<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Cheetham 1984, p.14a. Gardener 1940, p.68 and 80, suggested Bristol as a site for an alabaster effigy workshop on stylistic grounds. Cheetham [p.16a] notes that it was a centre for the export of finished alabaster work, and cites the example of Margery Walker, d.1546, a widow from Burton-on-Trent dealing in alabaster altarpieces, who paid rent for a shop in the city to Edward Jonys of Brystowe. Contrary to the widely held belief that all English alabaster derived from the Tutbury / Chellaston quarries in Derbyshire, it is clear from research by Dr. R.J. Firman of Nottingham University [Firman 1984, 1989] and others that Somerset was a producer of alabaster in the seventeenth century, and possibly earlier - hence alabastermen could possibly have been working more locally. A 'plasterparys' mine was operating at Dundon in the later thirteenth century.

<sup>25</sup> Cheetham 1984, p.31b. Amongst the examples he gives are the following: '*In 1479 two alabaster tables were exported from Poole valued at £3. During the same year and from the same port there were exported six alabaster tables valued at £6 and a case of images worth 26s. 8d., and one alabaster table valued at 20s., and another alabaster table valued at 20s. Three years later twenty alabaster tables were exported from Poole worth £26. 13s. 4d.*'

The price paid by the parish for their altarpiece suggests that it was of good quality and of medium size. The destruction of images at the Reformation and later means that few such complete retables have survived, but that known as the 'Swansea altarpiece' now in the Victoria and Albert Museum is probably the sort of thing which Tintinhull possessed, and the quality of the carving (and some sense of the original colouring) can probably be gauged from the fragment of an alabaster figure of St Michael discovered in the nineteenth century at Blackford St Michael, a smaller and poorer parish than Tintinhull. The general form of the Swansea altarpiece would also probably have resembled that of the Tintinhull retable, since this was the standard form in the second half of the fifteenth century,

'The fifteenth-century retables, constructed as triptychs to stand on the altar itself, contain panels of narrative scenes, often flanked at the ends by standing saints, all attached by wire to a wooden framework bearing descriptive Latin inscriptions painted below. Usually the central three panels form the shrine of the retable while each of the two hinged wings has one narrative panel with a standing saint. In their structure the altarpieces followed three main types. The simplest consisted of five narrative panels arranged in a simple horizontal line.... This simple horizontal form developed into an altarpiece with the central panel rising slightly higher than those flanking it, and the panels are surmounted by a zone of pierced tracery made up of separate pieces of alabaster.... A third type...also has its narrative panels arranged in a single horizontal zone but with the central scene - often a Crucifixion - projecting considerably above the others.'<sup>26</sup>

'*Tabula*', 'table', can refer either to a complete altarpiece or to a single panel, and it is likely from their price that the 'two tables' bought at the same time as the main altarpiece were individual panels. Is it possible that these were panels of the Visitation and St Anne (?teaching the Virgin), and that they eventually found their way back to the church and were framed and given painted titles - explaining the payment of 1483-4 '*pro scriptione Visitationis beate Marie et beate Anne - vjs*'.

In addition to the carved and painted alabaster retable there are indications of two other painted retables being made for the church. In 1514-15 two payments of 10/1d. were made to the painters W. Wheler and W. Ootts, '*for their labour*' (and therefore presumably not including the materials) '*pro pictura Altaris ex parte australi*'; while in the following year two further payments were made to painters '*fil cum syr*' - interpreted by Hobhouse as 'the son with the sire' - totalling £2 1s 10d. In the same year a small payment of 2d. was also made '*for payntyng of the kynggs crowne*', which could refer to the decoration of an

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<sup>26</sup> Cheetham 1984, p.22.

image, perhaps of a royal saint, or even of a Trinity.<sup>27</sup>

The altar of St Nicholas also seems to have been the recipient of a painted panel of some form, since a payment of 3/4d. was made *'in regardo pictori for Seynt Nicholas awter'* in 1516-17, but the much smaller sum involved suggests a commensurately smaller product.

#### The veils for Lent

Not only were the churchwardens providing (at least some of) the images within the church, they were also responsible for ensuring that they could be concealed during Lent, and there are payments for the washing of the veils with which they were covered and for the cord for suspending the lenten veil in the sanctuary. In 1437-8 they paid 6d. *'for the women of the place for washing altar cloths and for kerchiefs for the images this year'*, and a further 2d. *'for soap and brimstone bought at the same time'*. In 1454-5 cleaning materials of the same sort were purchased for the same reason - *'Et in brimstone empto pro le flammeolis [veils] in ecclesia lavandis'*; while in 1446-7 a cord for hanging the lenten veil cost 1d. - *'pro una corda empto pro le lente clothe suspendendo'*.

The lenten veil was specific to the sanctuary,

'During Lent... a huge veil was suspended within the sanctuary area, to within a foot or so of the ground, on weekdays completely blocking the laity's view of the celebrant and the sacring.... The veil was there precisely to function as a temporary ritual deprivation of the sight of the sacring. Its symbolic effectiveness derived from the fact that it obscured for a time something which was normally accessible; in the process it heightened the value of the spectacle it temporarily concealed.'<sup>28</sup>

The veil was not used during the canon of the Mass on the solemn days of Lent and was raised for the reading of the Gospel at masses on the ferial days, but was lowered again in order to conceal the elevation of the Host. Brackets to hold the lenten veil survive at Horsham St. Faith and Haddiscoe (Norf), and at Monk's Soham, Troston and Norton (Suffolk), Alfriston (Sussex), Shillington (Beds), etc., and pulleys for raising and lowering the veil survive at Salisbury cathedral and Ubbeston (Suffolk).

In the rest of the church the images were also individually veiled during Lent, and a cloth

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<sup>27</sup> It has also been suggested that it refers to a theatrical prop [R.E.E.D., Somerset]

<sup>28</sup> Duffy 1992, p.111.

was hung 'afore the roode on Palme Sunday' which was removed when the procession re-enacting the entry into Jerusalem reentered the church.

'In token of mourning the Great Rood was shrouded with a white cloth or veil from after compline on the First Sunday in Lent until the Fourth Station of the Procession on Palm Sunday, when, at the words *Ave Rex Noster Fili David Redemptor*, the veil was drawn aside, exposing the rood to view. At the close of evensong on Palm Sunday the rood was covered once more, and so continued until the *Gloria in Excelsis* in the mass of Easter Eve.'<sup>29</sup>

In 1468-70 the churchwardens of Tintinhull paid half a crown for a linen cloth to hang before the high cross - '*pro uno panno lineo empto ad pendendum ante altam crucem in ecclesia*'.

#### Liturgical accessories

Joseph Bettey, discussing the provision of materials for the fifteenth century Corpus Christi procession at Yeovil, notes that

'At nearby Tintinhull in 1433 the churchwardens purchased a latten pyx for carrying the sacrament in procession on Corpus Christi day.'<sup>30</sup>

This payment is the first recorded in the churchwardens' accounts for the purchase or repair of those items which no church could do without if it was to fulfil the requirements of the late medieval liturgy.

Of these the chalice was amongst the most important, and two were provided during the period covered by the late medieval accounts: that purchased in 1437-8 cost 30s; while in 1506-7 the sum of 47/6d. was paid for the '*makyng and gyltyng of a chalyce with costs made in the puttyng owt of the said warke*'. At the same time that the first chalice was purchased the wardens also paid 21s. for a '*cross of silver for the nave*'.

Central to the laity's experience of the mass was the 'sacring', the moment of the elevation

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<sup>29</sup> Vallance 1936, p.4.

<sup>30</sup> Bettey 1979, p.22. The pyx, more usually of silver or ivory than of latten (brass), would normally hang over the high altar, and contain the consecrated host. This may have been housed in a suspended tabernacle, and this may be the '*canopy*' referred to in 1469-70 and 1477-8 when a rope was purchased to operate it for 1d. on each occasion.

of the Host. Just before the sacring in every mass a bell was rung to warn the worshippers absorbed in their own prayers to look up, because the moment of consecration and elevation was near. In 1497-8 the churchwardens paid 2d. for a sacring bell - '*empt. j sakeryng bell*' - at this price, presumably a hand bell, rather than a bell to be fixed in a small bell-cote on the chancel roof. Ten years later they paid '*for mendyng of a sakeryng bell*'.

An incense burner, the thurifer, carried in procession and used to cense the altars and images, was purchased in 1483-4 for 1/4d; and in 1468-70 the wardens paid for repairs to the asperges bucket used to carry holy water for sprinkling during the liturgy - '*pro emendatione unius citule [bucket] pro aqua benedicta portanda*'.

In 1465-6 a pax was bought for the church for 4d., this being a small tablet usually of wood or ivory and bearing a representation of a sacred subject such as the cross, fixed to a handle and used to convey the kiss of peace by the celebrant, who would kiss it before inviting others to do so in turn.

The importance of burning candles in the late medieval church has already been alluded to, and the trendell hanging in front of the rood is referred to in most years' accounts, with a new one costing 6/4d. in 1465-6; repairs to the prickets were made in the same year for 1d; while in the previous year repairs had been made to a brass candelabrum - '*In emendatione unius candelabri auricalci [brass] fracti....ijd.*'

#### Woodwork

The ten bench ends which survive from the late medieval seating of the nave are probably all that remains of the work paid for in 1511-13. That these were not the first benches to be installed in the church is demonstrated by the receipt of 5/4d. paid to the churchwardens by John Trent '*for the oolde seets of the church*'. John Trent could be the same man who bought the bressummer from the old roodloft in 1451-2, but if so he would have had to be well over 70 years old by then, and it is likely to be his son, or even his grandson, continuing the family business. In 1501-2 J. Trent and J. Stacey painted two altar cloths for the church at a cost of 1/7d.

The new benches were made by an unnamed carpenter, suggesting that they were the products of a specialist workshop operating somewhere outside the village, and two payments were made during the year 1512-13: for 40s. and for 6/4d. In 1511-12

'...the churchwardens paid £1 13s 4d to the carpenter for 'sawying of tymber for seetys (seats) for ye churche and for cuttyng and framyng partt

of the same'.<sup>31</sup>

The pit-saw marks from this process are still clearly visible on the back of the western bench end of the main group on the north side of the nave, but the benches themselves are all gone, replaced with more comfortable sloping-backed benches during the Victorian restoration of 1883-5. Osborne has noted the stylistic relationships of the carving of the Tintinhull bench ends with Rimpton, Lovington and South Barrow (amongst others), and sees these sets as being products of a workshop which he has named the Corton Ridge workshop, and which he proposed operated between c.1475 and 1541.<sup>32</sup>

As Katherine French points out,

'Seating arrangements were one of the most obvious ways of marking social and gender differences. In the fifteenth century, naves did not commonly have pews.... Once there were seats in the nave, status and sex became important features of seating arrangements. Men and women typically sat in their own sections and not together as a family. The well-to-do bought good seats, those less well off bought seats farther from the altar, and the poor probably had no seats at all. Seating arrangements shaped the laity's experience of the liturgy and show that they did not consider themselves to be an undifferentiated or homogeneous group.'<sup>33</sup>

The sale of seats within the church often brought the churchwardens an important source of income,

'At Yeovil there was a large regular income from pew rents during the late Middle Ages; there was a fixed tariff, so that seats in the front and near the pulpit cost 18d per annum while those at the back cost 6d or less. It is also clear that the men and women sat in separate parts of the church.'<sup>34</sup>

Apart from the making of the roodloft in 1451-2, the other major carpentry work in the period covered by the late medieval accounts concerns the south door and the bell-frame. The former was renewed in 1441-2, when eight pieces of wood called 'Weynescote borde'

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<sup>31</sup> Bettey 1979, p.45. This reference is not included in Hobhouse but is noted in Rosbottom 1989.

<sup>32</sup> Osborne 2003.

<sup>33</sup> French 2001, p.162.

<sup>34</sup> Bettey 1979, p.46. According to Rosbottom 1989 the custom of selling seats at Tintinhull began in 1612.

were purchased at 1/2d each for the south door of the church (*pro viij tabulis ligneis vocatis Weynescote borde pro australi hostio ecclesie de novo facte, pro tabula xiiijd - ix. iijid.*), together with 120 strake nails at 1/2d. each (with diamond-shaped heads and similar 'washers' for the inner face where the nails were bent over), three iron hinges (*twystys ferreis*), and an iron ring and boss to pull the door shut (*uno annulo ferreo cum le bose [boss] ferreo ad claudendum dictum hostium*). The work was undertaken by the carpenter Thomas of Somerton who was paid 6/8d, with the materials costing a total of 20/6d.

The last major expense for carpentry work recorded in the medieval churchwardens' accounts is for the new bell-frame, which, with the making of six new bells, was the culmination of the work to the tower which began in 1516-17 with the raising of the top storey and the insertion of the stair turret.<sup>35</sup> 1539-40 saw the payment of £2 8s. 4d. for the new bell-cage, and other outlay for '*smaller items about the bells, and buying oaks for finishing the tower roof.*

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<sup>35</sup> Rosbottom 1989 also contains a reference to a payment '*for making of the West Window in the Tower*' in 1516.

## Visualising the late medieval church

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Working from the churchwardens' accounts we can begin to form a partial inventory of the fittings and contents of the church just before the Reformation, and by adding what we know of other churches at this time and what we can infer from the physical fabric of St Margaret's, this enables us to begin to visualise the building in its late medieval finery. The churchwardens' accounts give only a partial picture, however, since they only refer to payments and receipts which fell to the common responsibility of the lay parishioners, so that gifts of furnishings or fittings from major lay patrons, from the Priory or the Rector will not appear. Thus there is no mention in the accounts of any work to the south-eastern window of the nave, but this large Perpendicular opening is almost certainly related to the renewal of the rood-loft in the mid-fifteenth century, presumably created to provide light to the eastern end of the nave, its altars and adornments, or to the improvements around the rood and ceiling later in the century. Likewise, the churchwardens' involvement in the work to the west window of the nave seems to have been limited to paying to have the glass taken down from the old window. Furthermore, the records of the payments for the work to the tower are written on a separate sheet subsequently fixed into the account book and fortuitously preserved.

In the late middle ages the parishioners would have entered the church via the south porch, through Thomas of Somerton's door of 1441, the door in the chancel being for the sole use of the priest, and the west and north doors being reserved for processional and ritual purposes. Either in the north-east corner of the porch, or in the nave wall just east of the door, a stoup containing water would have enabled those entering the church to dip a finger and cross themselves while recalling their baptismal vows. Adjacent to this entrance would have been the existing font, symbolically placed near the main door since baptism was the entrance to membership of the church and the redemption which it promised. Whether the font had a tall crocketed and traceried cover is not known - though this could have been the canopy for which a rope was bought in 1469-70 and 1477-8 - but its lid was certainly lockable, and the iron staples with which it was fixed down have rusted and broken the stone, resulting in an open break on the north and a neatly carved Ham stone repair on the south side.<sup>36</sup>

The view to the east would have been dominated by the screen and the rood with its

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<sup>36</sup> Numerous orders for the locking of fonts to prevent the theft of the hallowed water for medicinal or magical purposes were made from the thirteenth century onwards - see Bond 1908, p.281ff., Cunningham 1999, p.19-20, etc.

painted tympanum above it, almost sealing off the chancel from view. At the base of the screen stood the two altars with painted or embroidered frontals and painted retables standing upon them. Above them the open tracery of the fourteenth century wooden screen, standing on top of the plain stone base, afforded the only view through to the chancel, and supported Thomas Dayfote's mid-fifteenth century loft, its panelling brightly painted and containing another altar at its centre and one or two lecterns at the sides. Behind the screen to the south there must have been a wooden stair to allow the priest (and perhaps the choir) access to the loft - this was usually built into the masonry of one of the side walls, but there is no trace of it at Tintinhull.<sup>37</sup> Above and behind the loft the head of the arch was filled with a boarded tympanum painted with a scene of the Last Judgement: at the apex Christ in Majesty seated on a rainbow, with kneeling saints interceding on behalf of the naked human figures rising from their graves beneath; to the north the blessed led to heavenly mansions by smiling angels, but to the south the damned being hurled headlong into the gaping mouth of hell by fiery demons. Against this backdrop was the great cross, near life-size with the standing figures of the Virgin Mary and St John the Evangelist, and perhaps on the wall around the chancel arch censuring angels or other decoration. Above, the ceiling of the nave was richly decorated over its eastern bay, while before the cross a round candelabrum was filled with candles, and perhaps as many as 40 other lights were ranged along the beam which supported the rood.

Even when the furnishings can be reconstructed in the mind's eye in this way, it is difficult for the modern imagination to supply the colour which was part of the everyday experience of the medieval church. Certainly the alabaster carvings would have been painted, and the churchwardens paid painters for work on the rood, the roodloft, the ceiling and at least two altarpieces, with one further unspecified payment in 1515-6 of just over £3 (more than the cost of making and fixing the roodloft). Part of the reason for the high cost of painting was the intrinsic nature of the materials, with pigments, particularly gold, silver or tin leaf, ultramarine and other minerals such as orpiment, being expensive, so that the cost of the decoration of a sculpture might be greater than the cost of carving it. The highly reflective surfaces of the metal leaf applied to sculpture and mouldings of wood and stone would have added to the numinous effects of the candle light which was abundant in the church, with votive prickets before the images, together with candelabra, altar and rood lights.

To what extent the walls of the church bore figure paintings cannot now be known, and little survives of this once rich artistic heritage of the middle ages in Somerset. It is likely

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The nave window and the squint make it impossible for a roodloft stair to have been built on the north wall, the windows and buttress between nave and chancel occupy the position it might have occupied on the south side. Its absence is contributory evidence for the retention of the fourteenth century screen when the loft was renewed in the mid-fifteenth century, since a complete renewal at that date (especially if the south-east nave window belonged to the same campaign) would probably have involved a new stair.

that a painting of St Christopher, like those at Wedmore, Ditchet and Cameley, stood opposite the south door to be glimpsed by anyone entering (or merely approaching) the doorway, since merely seeing his image would protect the viewer from sudden death that day. The St Christopher which remains at Cameley is accompanied on the north wall by a figure of an armed man who may be St George, and a St George also survives on the north nave wall at Nunney.

At Chalgrove (Oxon), one of the most complete surviving cycles of fourteenth century paintings is painted in three registers along walls punctuated by windows similar to those of Tintinhull's chancel, and it is probable that most medieval churches would have been decorated a similar way in nave and chancel. At Tintinhull all that can now be identified of the wealth of painted decoration are the remnants of white and red paint in the carvings of the foliage on the chancel arch springers.

Wall painting was a live tradition even after the Reformation, since painted texts and the royal arms replaced the figural paintings of the middle ages. In 1634-5 the wardens paid 40s. for '*setting up the King's arms and Sentences of scripture*', probably wall-paintings with texts in decorative borders of the sort which survive at Catcott, since in 1648 they paid again '*for striking out the King's arms*', rather than for simply taking down a painted board.

Within the late medieval chancel the focus would have been the high altar, with its newly purchased alabaster altarpiece. The altarcloth for the high altar bought in the 1480s or 90s cost the considerable sum of 9/4d., and was probably richly coloured and embroidered with angels and saints. The high altar was probably surrounded on three sides by curtains running between riddel posts, perhaps surmounted by carved angels, or with the provision for mounting candles, while hanging above it was the 'canopy' containing the consecrated host. The niche made for the statue of the Virgin Mary in 1510-11 may have been in the east wall south of the altar, with a matching niche containing a figure of St Margaret to the north. Colour on the walls and in the windows is now only hinted at by the fragments of stained glass gathered in the south-west window, colour in the floor by the few late thirteenth or early fourteenth century encaustic tiles on the sanctuary step. As in the nave, it is likely that the eastern bay of the roof above the altar was more richly painted and decorated than the remainder.

The new desk bought for the choir in 1507-8 at a cost of 2s. is the only clue to the chancel furnishings, but seats were certainly provided for the activities of the priest and his assistants in the east end of the church, both in the sanctuary where wooden sedilia were probably fitted, and in the western and central part of the spacious chancel - much of it probably the original furnishings from the fourteenth century remodelling of this part of the building. The priest's door is positioned unusually far to the west, at the eastern margin of the west bay, and between the springing of its head and the window immediately to its east the sill-level string-course rises to frame a blank rectangular area - conceivably

following the line of the top of the priest's stall on the south of the chancel.

Following the raising of the tower in 1516-17 the bell-cage was renewed and a new ring of at least six bells was installed by 1540. It is likely that the clock (in existence before 1434-5, when oil was purchased for it) was housed in the tower (where it could operate a linkage to one of the bells to strike the hours, and where the drop would be sufficient for the weights to operate it), and a new clock was bought in 1541-2 at a cost of 33/4d.

The exterior of the tower (and probably the whole of the church) would have been plastered and limewashed, so that it would have appeared white rather than the rich orange of the Ham stone fabric. In 1441-2, the same year that the roodloft was renewed, the churchwardens paid 2/9d. *'to John Harle there for pargetting and whitewashing the stone walls to the whole bell tower at that location there'*, and while it is not certain from this account that the payment was for exterior work, the extent of exterior plastering on other churches evidenced from early illustrations, surviving remains, descriptions and payments suggests that the whole church would have been rendered and whitewashed, and it is likely that this finish was maintained into the nineteenth century.

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## The impact of the Reformation

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It is clear that in Somerset major building operations were still underway as the effects of the Reformation began to be felt throughout the kingdom. The last of the monasteries were swept away by 1539, culminating in the closure of Glastonbury and the execution of its last abbot on the summit of the Tor in November that year. Yet the magnificent towers of Chewton Mendip and Batcombe were still under construction at this time. Nonetheless, within a generation much of the panoply accumulated with such effort and expense over the previous centuries was swept away in the name of reform as a religion of transcendental theatre was transformed into the religion of the book.

How quickly the strictures of the Reformation were applied in Tintinhull probably depended upon the persuasions of its incumbent, and the fact that it was the possession of Montacute Priory until the latter's dissolution suggests that the forms of the old religion were still being applied in the parish until well after the last Prior surrendered the house on 20 March 1539. Nonetheless, images, carved, painted and in glass, rood lofts, altars, the great rood above the chancel arch and its painted tympanum, were all gone or defaced by the first decade of Elizabeth's reign.

In the west-country Hugh Latimer was already '*preaching against the veneration, adornment, and lighting of images*'<sup>38</sup> in 1532, and in the following year he was at the centre of a series of divisive debates in Bristol, subsequently being recruited by Thomas Cromwell as a Reformation publicist. The Ten Articles of June 1536 accepted that images were

“...‘kindlers and firers of men’s minds’. They might therefore stand in the churches, but preachers were to ensure that the people were warned against idolatry. As for “censing of them, and kneeling and offering unto them, with other like worshippings”...the people were to be instructed that such worship was in reality not offered to the images, but only to God and in his honour “although it be done before the images, whether it be of Christ, or the cross, or of our Lady, or of any other saint beside”.”<sup>39</sup>

The injunctions of August 1536 forbade the clergy to '*set forth or extol any images, relics*

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<sup>38</sup> Duffy 1992, p.380.

<sup>39</sup> Duffy 1992, p.392.

*or miracles for any superstitious lucre*, and it was such images, popularly held to be imbued with miraculous powers, which were initially the sole target for reformers. The 1538 Injunctions include the command that “*such feigned images as ye know of in any of your cures to be so abused with pilgrimages or offerings of anything made thereunto, ye shall...forthwith take down and delay.*” This injunction was reissued and strengthened in 1547, when it commanded the clergy to proceed with the destruction of all images abused even by the simple act of censuring - and since the censuring of the altar at Tintinhull and elsewhere would have included the alabaster altarpiece and the niches of the saints which may have flanked it, a reforming minister might have removed the sculptures at this point. The discord which this injunction caused had to be suppressed, ‘*and since the only places in the realm where there was no conflict were those where all the images had been removed, they [the Lords of the Council, Feb.1548] therefore ordered that all images in every church and chapel, abused or not, should now be taken away.*’<sup>40</sup>

The Injunctions of July 1559 under Elizabeth I provided for the abolition of images including those in window and wall, and it is often to this period that the common practice is attributed of hacking niches back and using the fragments of these and the sculptures themselves as rubble to fill up the holes. For instance, on December 21st 1571 the Queen’s Commissioners wrote to the Dean and Chapter of Bristol Cathedral instructing, with regard to their pulpitum, to ensure that “*the tabernacles were defaced and hewen down, and afterwards made a playne walle with mortar and plaster*”. At St Cuthbert’s, Wells (Som.), reredoses in both transepts were treated in just this fashion, being packed with fragments of the smashed statuary and plastered flush, to be exposed again in the restoration of 1848; the same appears to have been the case at Wells Cathedral, where ‘the wall behind the high altar’ was taken down in 1753 also exposing polychromed statuary, which has all been lost subsequently; and at Ottery St Mary, likewise, the great stone reredos and the niches of the choir were hacked back and plastered flush utilising painted fragments.

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<sup>40</sup> Duffy 1992, p.458.

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## The post-medieval church

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### New fittings and furnishings

The removal of the late medieval furnishings designed for the Catholic liturgy was balanced by the installation of the new fittings to serve the religion of the book. The churchwardens obeyed the injunctions of 1540 and purchased a new Bible in 1541-2, also buying a chain to hold it for 3d. However, the key period of the reigns of Edward VI and Mary, when the pendulum of reform swung between its wildest extremes, is missing from the churchwardens' accounts.

Pulpit and communion table were central to the new system. The pulpit had become more important towards the end of the middle ages, as preaching had begun to form a more important role,

‘It is difficult to be sure just how widespread Sunday preaching was: over two hundred pre-Reformation pulpits survive in England, most of them from the fifteenth century, a remarkable number which does suggest a growth in the perceived importance of preaching as part of parochial life. It is true that pulpits had a variety of uses, and parish priests almost certainly used them more regularly for “bidding the bedes” at the parish Mass than for preaching, but inscriptions and paintings on some pulpits do suggest that pulpits in general were seen primarily as platforms for teaching, not for prayer.’<sup>41</sup>

Tintinhull may have already had a pulpit at the Reformation, since a new one (that which still exists) was not made until 1623. Indeed, the likelihood is compounded by the payment of 12d. by the churchwardens in 1477-8 ‘*For the bedrowyll to the prest at iij times*’. The reading of the Bede Roll, or the Bidding of Bedes, took the form of the priest bidding the people to pray for all sorts and conditions of men, corresponding in most respects to the prayer for the Church Militant in the Prayer Book, and

‘Then the priest specially commended to the people’s prayers, either for their souls or their good estate, all particular benefactors “that have honoured the church wyth light, lamp, vestment, or bell, or any ornaments

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<sup>41</sup> Duffy 1992, pp.57-8. See also Cox 1915, pp. 1-26.

by the whyche the service of Almighty God is the better maintained and kept."<sup>42</sup>

The present pulpit is one of a number of true Jacobean pulpits in Somerset, Cox listing eight others with an additional eight dated examples in the county. Tintinhull is one of three which he mentions (with Bishops Lydeard and Wedmore) as bearing the rose and thistle conventionally treaded under arcading.<sup>43</sup>

Edmund Rack's description of the church in the late eighteenth century mentions a '*Singers' gallery handsomely fronted with panneld [wa]jinscot*', and Bond had surmised that '*there had also been an interesting western gallery, of the Stuart period, like the pulpit.*' There is, however, no mention of the west gallery in the churchwardens' accounts before they end in 1678, and it may be that this was a creation of the late seventeenth or eighteenth century. West galleries tend to be of post-Restoration vintage, since their function was to provide accommodation for the church orchestra and singers, who replaced the organs destroyed by decree of Parliament during the Commonwealth. In an Order of Council issued on 9 May 1644, the Lords and Commons ordained,

'...that all representations of the Trinity, or of any Angel or Saint in or about Any Cathedral, Collegiate, or Parish Church or Chapell or in any open place within this Kingdom shall be taken away, defaced and utterly demolished.... And that all Organs and frames or cases wherein they stand in all Churches and Chapells aforesaid shall be taken away, and utterly defaced, and none other hereafter set up in their places. And that all Copes, Surplices, superstitious Vestments, Roods and Fonts aforesaid be likewise utterly defaced....'<sup>44</sup>

While most of the images, vestments and roods were gone already, and the fonts, turned out of churches into the churchyard or taken for use as troughs, could be reclaimed at the Restoration of the king, organs were more easily removed, broken or sold off, so that in 1660 most churches lacked any means of musical accompaniment to the liturgy. This lack was filled by the village choir and band and the provision of a west gallery to house them. All that is known for certain of the Tintinhull band and its instruments is that it must have ceased operations in the third quarter of the nineteenth century, when a temporary organ was obtained, and that the last of the village instruments - a violincello - was to '*be disposed of & the proceeds be applied towards the Church Organ Fund*' in 1871.

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<sup>42</sup> Cox 1915, p.20.

<sup>43</sup> Cox 1915, pp.135-6.

<sup>44</sup> Quoted in MacDermott 1949, p.2.

Also probably of later seventeenth or eighteenth century date are the three flap-seats attached to the medieval bench ends of the nave. 'Hanging seats' or 'flap seats' are well attested in documentary evidence, and another Somerset example survives at Baltonsborough, while the hinges to fix another remain at Brompton Ralph. In 1651-2 the accounts for St Edmund's, Salisbury record payments relating to both hanging and sliding seats:

'Mrs Ann Carter, hanging seat for servant 1s. - Josse, wife of Perigan Dawes, sliding seat before Magistrate's Pew 2s 6d. - Mrs Battes, widow, a flap seat fixt to her owne for servant 6d.'<sup>45</sup>

Sliding seats took the form of narrow planks with legs at the outer end which could slide beneath the bench through a letter-box sized slot in the face of the bench end. These could be safely stowed out of the way and withdrawn when needed. Examples survive at Catcott, and the holes for them are left open at Chedzoy, or have been neatly repaired at Stogursey, Stogumber and elsewhere. A possible example can be seen in the narrow bench-back bench end on the north side of the nave at Tintinhull, where a letter-box sized repair may fill such a slot for a sliding seat.

The three surviving Tintinhull flap seats are on two north-facing and one south-facing end; the sliding seat belongs to a south-facing end. Most of the documentary references to such subsidiary seats (as in the instances above) relate to pews on the female (northern) side of the church, and it is of interest to note that all but three of the eleven sliding seats at Stogumber are situated to the north. They were the province of the servants or children of the owners of the benches to which they were attached. Hanging seats could be fixed at the same height as the bench itself, and were probably more suitable for individual servants; whereas sliding seats always had to be positioned below the seat belonging to the bench (necessarily making them lower), and since they could also be longer and accommodate more than one occupant, were better suited to children.<sup>46</sup>

### Structural alterations

It is likely that the north door of the nave was blocked up relatively soon after the

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<sup>45</sup> quoted in Cox 1916, p.19.

<sup>46</sup> At Stogursey bench end No.28 (the easternmost except for the frontal-end on the south side) has two successive slots at different heights, as if a second seat had been made when the children had grown.

Reformation. Its function, as part of the circulatory system for the processions of the medieval church year, would have ceased with the abandonment of the Catholic liturgy in the mid sixteenth century; left as a doorway it would have been no more than a source of extra maintenance costs and draughts. However, the external Ham stone blocking within the arch is less lichen-clad than the surrounding stonework or the rebuilt walling above, and it may be that the closure of the doorway is relatively recent.<sup>47</sup>

In the tower the centre of the eastern ground floor elevation is occupied by an inserted doorway with a four-centred head and horizontally stopped label moulding of seventeenth century character, and associated with a white lime fixing mortar. If the tower base accommodated a chapel in the middle ages, the creation of this doorway must have post-dated its demise, and probably represents either the conversion of the chamber into a vestry, or possibly its use as a way for the ringers to reach the ringing chamber stair without passing through the church. The latter function was fulfilled (apparently at a slightly later date, judging by the surface morphology of the door head) by the insertion of a doorway in the western face of the stair turret, accessed by four steps (and a threshold within the door itself). The door aperture has been cut through the early sixteenth century ashlar skin of the turret, with the four-centred arch head inserted in new stone. This form of alteration is commonly found in towers where access to the upper stages for the ringers or the occupants of the singers' gallery is via a vestry,<sup>48</sup> and the likeliest sequence is the conversion of the tower-base chapel into a vestry in the seventeenth century, followed by the insertion of the exterior door by a later (eighteenth century) incumbent sufficiently incommoded by the intrusion of the ringers to authorise the new door in the turret.

That there has been subsequent movement in the tower is shown by the presence of 'S' shaped braces forming the ends of restraining bars at the base of the structure running east-west, and higher up running north-south.

#### Church and society in the post-medieval period

The social constitution of the church within the parish of Tintinhull in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is summarised by the editors of the Victoria County History,

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<sup>47</sup> The pointing / fixing mortar is mixture of dark grey ashy lime and Portland cement. The Priddle monument of 1773 is fixed within the door recess on the interior, but may have been moved here from elsewhere.

<sup>48</sup> e.g. Compton Martin, Shepton Beauchamp, Beaminster, etc.

For most of the 18th century the benefice was combined with Thorn Coffin rectory and, in the persons of Edward Napper or Napier (vicar from 1741 until at least 1752) and of his son Edward (vicar 1772–1816) was held by members of the patron's family. The last was an absentee, living in 1815 on a third cure at Sutton Waldren (Dors.). At least eleven assistant curates successively served the church during the younger Napper's incumbency. John Valentine, one of these and vicar 1816–44, was also chaplain of Ilchester gaol.

By 1827 one service with sermon was held every Sunday, alternately morning and afternoon. Two sermons were preached every Sunday by 1843, Holy Communion was celebrated each quarter, and children were catechized weekly. In 1851 there was no resident minister, and in consequence there was only one service on Census Sunday, when 159 people attended in the afternoon. The average congregation was said to be 100 in the morning and 150 in the afternoon, with Sunday-school pupils numbering 56 in the morning and 76 in the afternoon. Two services with sermons were the rule in 1870, the second service having been moved to the evening. Holy Communion was celebrated eight times a year.

#### The use of the churchyard

In the late medieval and earlier post-medieval period, when grave markers were relatively rare, the churchyards of most Somerset churches were used for recreational purposes, and there are numerous references to the nuisances caused by maypoles and the playing of bowls, quoits, and particularly fives or handball. This latter, played with a hard ball in a similar way to squash, but with the bare hand rather than a racquet, is known to have been popular in south Somerset, where fives walls were built in the yards of a number of local inns towards the end of the eighteenth century - the Crown at South Petherton, the Bull at Curry Rivel, the Poulet Arms at Hinton St George, the New Inn at Shepton Beauchamp, and the Fleur de Lys at Stoke sub Hamdon. The game is known to have been banned at Martock in 1758,

'...it having been found to be the occasion of much mischief being done to the windows of the Church, and even to the Leads and walls of it, and also of much wickedness causing swearing, quarreling, and fighting in the Churchyard and so forth. We therefore being met in the Vestry considering what is above written... do order and allow that whereas a man has had his skull fractured by a stone falling on his head by another climbing up into the leads for a ball, that the Churchwardens endeavour to

put a stop to the playing [of] fives in the Churchyard by digging a ditch across ye fives place or any other method they shall think proper.<sup>49</sup>

At Montacute the players went so far as to have the decorative quatrefoil bands trimmed off the south side of the tower to improve the playing surface (though the next incumbent had the churchyard cross moved into the court to stop the game being played). Given that the game is known to have been playing in three of the neighbouring parishes it is highly likely that it was a pastime in Tintinhull, and unless an alternative venue was available the churchyard is the most likely place for it to have been played.

With a lancet window in the east and west ground-floor elevations, and a demi-octagonal stair-turret on the north elevation, the tower itself would probably have been unplayable. The west bay of the nave on the north side, however, is unfenestrated,<sup>50</sup> and the bay to the east of this is occupied only by the blocked northern doorway (the hood-moulding of which stands proud of the wall). It is therefore possible that the north elevation of the west bay of the nave between the two western buttresses could have been the site of a village fives court, with the blind bay next to it unthreatened by ricochets. The eastern window of the nave on the north elevation has had some form of fixing inserted to protect the glass, since there are stubs of fixings at sill level on both jambs, and traces of filled holes at half-height on the jambs and a little above the springing of the arch-head. In the latter case there may be some reworking of the adjacent stone also. However, inspection of the corresponding window on the south elevation shows identical fixings, and there is little or no likelihood that fives could have been played against the fully fenestrated south wall; therefore, these fixings may well be unrelated to fives playing.

There is no trace of adaptations to the buttresses for climbing to the roof (though the main northern buttress has been rebuilt over its upper extent). The low parapet would have trapped any ball driven above the wall, and since the wall of the nave is quite low it seems that there would have had to be some form of access to the roof.

The case for fives in the churchyard at Tintinhull is, therefore, likely but unproven. Does documentary evidence exist?

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<sup>49</sup> Saunder 1921, p.

<sup>50</sup> Although rebuilt, Buckler's prospect of the church from the north-east shows that the west bay of the north nave elevation was unfenestrated in 1835.

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## The repair history and the nineteenth century restoration

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The overall repair history of the church is difficult to reconstruct from the fabric alone, since the major repairs of the 1880s have masked much of the earlier work which must have taken place. The lay rector was presented for allowing the chancel to decay in 1554, and the fabric was in need of attention in 1568.<sup>51</sup> The churchwardens' accounts cease in 1678, so that the most obvious source for documenting the repairs to the building in the later seventeenth and eighteenth centuries is absent.

In 1862 following discussions at a Vestry Meeting on 19 June,

‘The Parish Church being in a very bad state, it is resolved that the part of the church belonging to the Parish be whitewashed, & the stone of the windows, the porch and the Font be cleaned; provided that Gen<sup>l</sup>. Arbuthnott will clean and whitewash the Chancel at the same time and that a copy of this resolution be forwarded to the Lay Rector.

It was further decided *‘that the tender of John Hann for doing the above work belonging to the Parish for £16-10-0 be accepted’*.<sup>52</sup>

By 1871 it appears that the village orchestra had been replaced by a temporary organ, and also that the wardens were casting around for ways of raising money, the Vestry Meeting of 15 April probably recorded the final demise of the church band, since

‘It was resolved that the Parish Churchwarden dispose of the old Church doors<sup>53</sup> & apply the proceeds towards Church Expenses of the Parish - & that the Violincello be disposed of & the proceeds be applied towards the Church Organ Fund.’<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> S.R.O., D/D/Ca 22 and 40 quoted in VCH 1973.

<sup>52</sup> This and later references to the Vestry Minutes from S.R.O. D/P\tin/9/1/1

<sup>53</sup> Perhaps including that by Thomas of Somerton.

<sup>54</sup> This shift from the church band to the organ presumably also sounded the knell for the west gallery.

The major later nineteenth century restoration of the church occurred relatively late, and is surprisingly little documented. Lydia Rosbottom's timeline summarised it, stating that it lasted a full twelve months from November 1882,

Nov. 1882. Work on the Restoration of St. Margaret's Church, Tintinhull, was begun. The plans were prepared by Mr. A.W. Hansell, and architect from London, whose designs wisely provided that none of the interesting features of the original building should be destroyed. Mr. Hansell bore testimony to the faithful way in which the Contractor, Messrs. Fredk. Fane and Son of Stoke-Sub-Hamdon, carried out the work, (The Church was re-opened by Lord A.C, Hervey, 28 Nov. 1883.)

The Vestry Minutes show that moves to mount a restoration of the church were afoot by 1870, when the meeting on 21 April

'agreed that a Committee be formed to raise sufficient money to repew and put into a proper state of repair the Parish Church'

By 1879 a report had been obtained from A.W. Hansell and a Vestry Meeting was called on 9 October,

"For the purpose of taking into consideration the Architect's Report of the Nave of the Church & devising means for the carrying out of the same".

and the report was duly forwarded to the restoration committee - the wording of the resolution making it clear that the main object of concern was the structural state of the nave. On 30 November 1882 the Vestry Meeting unanimously carried the motion to begin the restoration and to open a subscription list for the restoration fund; the same meeting also determined that

'Mr Hawkins of Bournemouth be informed that the Organ left by him in this Parish is considered to be unsuitable for the Church & that as a Committee is now formed to carry out the restoration of the Church, it is desired that the Organ Fund for Tintinhull Church now in Mr Hawkins' hands be paid to the Vicar & Churchwardens to be continued as an organ fund.'

The sum of £54.1.3. '*being the Organ Fund collected by Mr Hawkins of Bournemouth was duly received by the Vicar the 24 March*', and a year later on 27 March 1884 the Vestry voted unanimously

'...that £50 be borrowed from the Organ Fund & that the Church Committee for the Restoration Fund be responsible for the outlay of another £100 & that the Vicar & Churchwardens give instructions to the

Architect Mr Hansell to the effect that the restoration of the Church according to the Plans & Specifications may be commenced forthwith.

- evidently the dates for the work given in the timeline are incorrect. The work was certainly completed by May 1886, when the vicar was asked to prepare a balance sheet for the Restoration Committee.

The work undertaken in the 1880s was the subject of an application to the Incorporated Church Building Society in 1883, for reseating and repairs, including '*new roof and general repairs*',<sup>55</sup> the application being rejected, and no plans are lodged in the Lambeth Palace archive.

This restoration appears not to have been well received: Frederick Bligh Bond, conducting members of the Somerset Archaeological Society around the church in 1910, said that

'....changes which had been made were not for the better. Within living memory a good many alterations had taken place, and in the old days there was a fine stone screen - he did not know of what type, as there was little of it left. There had also been an interesting western gallery, of the Stuart period, like the pulpit.'

Speaking of the piscina in the south wall of the chancel he noted that it

'...had been reconstructed, but seemed to contain original stone-work. He though it had been carefully restored, and wished they could say the same of other things, and especially of the windows. Dr. Price told him that there had been until recent years an interesting east window of the xiv or xv Century. This had been taken out, but there were sufficient parts left to make a reconstruction on paper. When the church was restored some years ago this was sacrificed and the roofs modernised; and there were other things not quite as they would like to see them.'<sup>56</sup>

Closer to the date of the work, and in the presence of the incumbent who oversaw it, the visit by the Archaeological Society to the church in 1886 was less overt in its criticism, but nonetheless,

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<sup>55</sup> [www.churchplansonline.org](http://www.churchplansonline.org) Incorporated Church Building Society (Lambeth Palace Library) Ref.: ICBS 08876.

<sup>56</sup> Bond 1910, p.71-2. Glynne, however, writing in 1840 described the east window as '*bad and modern*'.

'The President thought it would be appropriate here to remark how desirable it was that lovers of antiquities should keep a record, however imperfect, of the objects of interest they met with in churches and old buildings. He was in this church, in August, 1833, and made a rough drawing of three heraldic tiles on the chancel steps.... He did not visit the church again until about a week ago, when, on looking at his notes, he found No.2 was missing; and he should be glad to know what had become of it.'<sup>57</sup>

Rev. Hyson's response includes the sentence (surprising in the context of Bond's criticisms, and the known work to the roofs and the east window) that

'The only alteration which had been made at the last restoration was the lowering of the wall which divided the nave and chancel by about one foot.'<sup>58</sup>

On the basis of these accounts, taken together with what is known of the church, it is likely that Hensell's work on the fabric included the rebuilding of the upper parts of the north wall of the nave from the level of the springing of the north door, perhaps the rebuilding of the east and west gables above the windows and certainly the renewal of the east window. The nave and chancel roofs appear to belong to this period, the old ceiled roofs as well as the ceillure described by Rack were renewed in the 1880s according to Dr. Price; but there is no evidence that the screen survived this late, as Bond's account might suggest. The tiled floors probably displaced the ledger slabs (now fixed against the north wall of the chancel) at this period; and the present benches with modern ends (both carved and plain) were probably installed, retaining ten of the early sixteenth century bench ends. Glynne did not mention the singers' gallery, but this lay outside his period of interest, and he may simply have ignored it - the existence of the violincello in 1871 suggests that the church band had been operating until relatively recently - and the gallery may have survived until the 1880s.<sup>59</sup>

Following the completion of Hensall's restoration the late nineteenth century also saw the

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<sup>57</sup> Ferrey 1886, p.71.

<sup>58</sup> Ferrey 1886, p.71. If this is correct it indicates (i) that the wall was not integral with the chancel arch, but was built subsequent to its insertion; and (ii) that the rectangular repairs now about a foot above the top of the wall are indeed the anchor points for the dado rail of the wooden superstructure of the screen.

<sup>59</sup> Bailey, Hyson et al, 1995, p.3 say that the work '*included re-building of the south chancel wall*'.

installation of the present organ (though in the chancel, rather than in its present position in the north-western corner of the nave). A meeting in the village on 4 March 1889<sup>60</sup> 'appointed a Committee to place an Organ in the Church', and resolved 'that the said Committee held themselves responsible for the sum of £200 for the above object'. W.G. Vowles, organ builder, of 3 St. James Square, Bristol, was invited to prepare an estimate and specification for the new organ, and his specifications and elevations were approved on 22 July 1889, and the new instrument was commissioned. It was dedicated in 1890, and moved to its present position in 1970.<sup>61</sup>

The 20th century: vestry and churchyard cross

The English Heritage listing<sup>62</sup> attributes the churchyard cross War Memorial to Sir Ninian Comper, with the date of 1920. Symondson and Bucknall note that Dr. Salisbury James Murray Price (1858-1926) 'used Comper.... for the war memorial at Tintinhull', and their gazetteer dates it 1919-20.<sup>63</sup>

The nineteenth century stained glass of the east window was replaced with the present glass (the gift of the local Southcombe family), by F.C. Eden in 1930.<sup>64</sup> According to Freeman, the electric lighting was installed in 1935, and the lectern in 1938, both to the design of W.D. Caroe.<sup>65</sup>

The English Heritage listing attributes the western vestry, abutting the west end beneath the sill of the west window, to Ninian Comper; however, this was erected in 1951-2, and

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<sup>60</sup> Recorded in the Vestry Minute Book under the chairmanship of Sam Penny the churchwarden, but with the minutes struck out with the note, 'The above was not a vestry meeting', and signed by Rev. J.B. Hyson

<sup>61</sup> Bailey, Hyson et al, 1995, p.3.

<sup>62</sup> Available online at [www.imagesofengland.org](http://www.imagesofengland.org)

<sup>63</sup> Symondson and Bucknall 2006, p.29, and brief gazetteer entry p.297. S.R.O. D\P\tin/10/2/1 contains the estimate, account and correspondence with designer and mason about the village War Memorial (Designed by J.N. Comper and executed by William D. Gough of Kennington); S.R.O. D\D/cf/1920/144 is the Faculty for the work.

<sup>64</sup> S.R.O. D\D/cf/1930/96 - Faculty.

<sup>65</sup> Freeman 1990, p.251. The faculty for the lighting [S.R.O. D\D/cf/1935/97] also includes reference to the movement of benches.

was the work of Alban Caroe of Caroe and Partners, as is clearly evidenced by the use of a 'Caroe latch' on the south door.<sup>66</sup> Alban Caroe tended towards plain chamfered mullions, as here on the west windows, or as in his minimalist reconstruction of the Perpendicular fenestration of St Mary's Chapel at St Davids Cathedral (Pemb.). The new structure has been keyed into the west faces of the medieval buttresses. According to Bailey, Hyson et. al., the vestries

'were built and dedicated in 1952 in gratitude for the safe return of all Tintinhull men and women who served in the 1939-45 war.'

Also, '*the nave roof was completely overhauled and re-tiled in 1984*'.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> It is correctly attributed to the Caroe practice by [www.churchplansonline.org](http://www.churchplansonline.org) but its author is given as W.D. Caroe, Alban's father, who died in 1938. Incorporated Church Building Society (Lambeth Palace Library) Refs.: ICBS 12926 Folios 9ff; Minutes: Vol.35, p.129.

<sup>67</sup> Bailey, Hyson et al, 1995, p.3.

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