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Analyse the principal features of a medieval church in England or Wales and give a brief outline and explanation of its architectural development.

All Saints Church<sup>1</sup>, Leighton Buzzard<sup>2</sup>([A. Mawer and F. M. Stenton, 1926](#)), has an unusual story. It originated in the early 13th century, replacing an Anglo-Saxon chapel recorded in the Domesday Book ([Martin, 2003](#)).

The church is on the lowlands southeast of the manor house<sup>3</sup>, south and east of the River Ouzel crossing (See Figures 1-3)<sup>4</sup>. There is no evidence of any religious context for the site. All Saints was a Peculiar, independent of a Bishop (Bishop of Dorchester-on-Thames, now St Albans) or archdeacon, allowing it to enact changes to the building ([Bedfordshire County Archives, 2023a](#)). The manor was denoted as a Prebendary (Oxford Languages, 2023), controlled goods and stock crossing the river, and thus provided funds to construct the church. This setting explains its unusual location and scale<sup>5</sup> ([Jervis, 2022](#)).

Construction began in 1277, and it was consecrated in 1288. The Gothic structure features a Western Latin cruciform layout (see Figure 4) with two transepts north and south ([Bandmann, 2005](#)). It was embellished with the Perpendicular style and underwent minor internal Gothic Revival changes in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century and 20<sup>th</sup> Century infills following a fire in 1985 (see figure 4).

The church has an altar in the East; like Muslims today, early Christians worshipped toward an established Holy church in Jerusalem ([Kilde, 2008](#)). Its walls, tower, spire and nave arcades date from the 13<sup>th</sup> century. The crossing square tower (9m square and 21m high) and spire (58m tall with a slight bulge) were erected shortly after the chancel, presumed the oldest part of the church ([Williams B, 2017](#)). Most of the walls have a perpendicular style, with plain battlements, except those of the south transept and the gable ends of the chancel and the parish office (northeast), noting the religious context of the earthly battle toward Heaven. It is adorned with 25 gargoyles<sup>6</sup> and 5 sundials – to ward off evil spirits and connect one man's precious time on earth and a large quantity of preserved graffiti noting its prestige ([Nilsen B, 1998](#), [Sheridan and Ross, 1975](#)). The spire, protruding like a pyramid pointing toward heaven, has become a landmark. Almost all furnishings, including the lectern and ironmongery on the Western doorway, originate from the 13th century. The church is aesthetically elegant, austere and full of pointed archways ([All Saints Preservation Trust, 2009](#))

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<sup>1</sup> All Saints appear to suggest that the church didn't belong to one particular saint and seems to suggest it was concentrated to All-Hallows, hence All Saints.

<sup>2</sup> Leighton Buzzard gets its name from the corruption of one of the church's rectors, Mr de Busar. The Diocese of Lincoln had two similar named places, and to differentiate them, one was called Leyton de Busar to distinguish them.

<sup>3</sup> The prebend Manor of Leighton Buzzard – was demolished in 1819. Leighton Cedars School is on the location of the old Manor House complex and is adorned by shops on the northern front, buildings of Cedars School (former buildings of the manor) and 4-14 Church Square.

<sup>4</sup> The river marked the original county boundary between Buckinghamshire and Bedfordshire.

<sup>5</sup> Church Square shifted toward the new market area, the High Street, which is why the church has been found away from the main street. The main reason for its size was that the original parish was much more extensive and incorporated the villages of Billington, Eggington, Heath & Reach and Stanbridge.

<sup>6</sup> Gargoyles and other ornaments have symbolic meaning to ward off evil spirits and act as drains.

(lancets) - the compound columns abound. There are no vaulted ceilings. The only example of any Romanesque origins is the font.

The building is constructed of brown pudding/autochthonous stone excavated from Totternhoe Quarry (a sandstone giving it a reddish-brown colour) with oolitic Limestone (whitish-grey) used for the quoins, buttresses and external spire (60m high)<sup>7</sup> (Pickford C, 1998). The roof is lead. The choice of material reflects the cost/benefit of splendour v source, transport, ease of use, and nature of the material (Roberts, 1974, Curran, 2005). Recent exterior repair work favours a hardier limestone than the Totternhoe Clunch and Puddingstone from quarries<sup>8</sup>. Clunch and the Pudding stone have a high wear rate, which is noted because all the buttresses have also been replaced/repared<sup>9</sup>. All the buttresses are of the angled flat-topped stepped variety, save that of the tower, which is clasping topped with gothic finials, added much later (see exterior Figures 9-11).

The Chancel is the oldest part of the church, with 2 piscinæ and 3 sedilia seats on the southern side<sup>10</sup>. Evidence of the original rood screen can be found<sup>11</sup>; the top was replaced by a 'sedate' Victorian one and an interesting dolphin-like tracery (figure 15). The stone corbels supporting the roof brackets, adorned with saints, are Victorian replacements. Above the altar, the stained glass in the eastern end was destroyed in the 1985 fire and once held medieval glass - it is now sadly plain. There are 27 15th-century misericords (Figure 16) with elaborate carvings, including 14 heads, six foliage, two heraldic birds and one two men or monkeys<sup>12</sup> and the alter rail dates from the 17<sup>th</sup> Century. The lectern is the oldest in the country (Bedfordshire County Archives, 2023b), and the reredos is early 20<sup>th</sup> Century. The nave has 4 bays with chamfered arches supported by octagonal pillars with moulded capitals and bases (Figure 14).

The clerestory and the nave's 'angel roof' were added (figure 14 and 16). Others replaced throughout the rest of the church in the 15th Century at the expense and request of Lady of the Manor Alice de la Pole, Duchess of Suffolk, who held the manor from 1467 to 1475, denoting a continued connection with the Prebendary and the high status of the manor and prestige of the church. Her East Anglian connection means that the clerestory style is considered atypical for Bedfordshire (Page, 1912). At the same time, the tracery in

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<sup>7</sup> It is presumed Totternhoe but are probably further afield and were used for many churches throughout Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire

<sup>8</sup> The Totternhoe Quarry closed in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century and there is no prospect of it being reopened. I was unable to find evidence of where this new material was sourced, but it is starkly contrasted with the original. This gives authentication of repair against the original.

<sup>9</sup> This is also to provide additional support after the 1985 fire.

<sup>10</sup> These were built into the original wall and are Early English and must have been part of the original construction.

<sup>11</sup> Denoting a delineation of man vs. those next to God. As fashions changed these became less ornate and more open.

<sup>12</sup> These are thought to have originated from the monastic stalls at St Albans Abbey. The characters denote features of nature and man's governance over them (i.e., by sitting on them and being part of them, we are all one in God's Kingdom).

most windows was replaced in the Perpendicular style. The roof was altered, evidenced by the higher-pitched roofing marks on the south side of the tower.

A west gallery was added in 1634 and removed in 1840, presumably to provide space for more graves in the churchyard. The square cross tower was structurally enhanced and extended in 1671, and two bells were added in 1632 and 1639. The chancel was repaired in 1657, and a north porch was added or rebuilt in 1670 ([Bedfordshire County Archives, 2023b](#)). The church underwent several repairs post-1700, and a new ring of eight bells was provided in 1787 ([Bedfordshire County Archives, 2023b](#)).

Post 1700 is not well-documented. However, in 1840, 'restoration' work began with plans made by Thomas Stephens of Turvey. Later, the work supervised London architect John Livock<sup>13</sup>. During this time, the Gothic Revival movement was at its peak, starting with Augustus Pugin, who believed that Gothic architecture was superior to Classical architecture aesthetically and morally. It was a challenge to make changes to the exterior of ecclesiastical buildings without incurring significant expenses, so most of All Saints's repair work was internal. The work included "*installation of new galleries, a new pulpit and desk, the ringing room raised above the arches of the crossing and pinnacle added to the tower*" ([Bedfordshire County Archives, 2023b](#)). The pews/galleries were a movement to increase the capacity of churchgoers in a theatre-like environment and control the social status of its guests (see Figures 5 & 6). This necessitated new pulpits and the like. One commentator, Mr John Martin, said, "*The exterior of this noble church called forth the praise of that distinguished architect, Mr Rickman*<sup>14</sup>. *The interior was [however] committed to the hands of those little acquainted with ecclesiastical architecture,*" noting further that the changes "[disfigured] *the building, and giving it a very theatrical appearance*" ([Pickford C, 1998](#)). In other words, the exterior had been mainly untouched except for the tower embellished with Gothic parapets. Mr Martin went on to observe:

*"A new pulpit and reading desk have been introduced, and though they are separated and so far an improvement, it is to be regretted they are placed at the wrong end of the church. Anything is, however, preferable to the "three courses", one over the other, that we have observed in some other churches in this county, the tasteful production of the village carpenter. Why a new pulpit was required, we are ignorant since casting our eye into one of the transepts, a sort of receptacle for lumber of all kinds; we observed the old one, the lectern and other fragments of carved wood, which would have been far better in place of the modern work which has superseded them. The chancel's wooden roof remains; some stalls are greatly disfigured by the restorer. The miserable wash with which the walls are coloured cannot be too much censured. The altar was in respectable*

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<sup>13</sup> He was best known for constructing the London and North Western Railway, which was being constructed at the time. The LNWR buildings were all Gothic Revival Styles – see for example St Pancras – a notable similarity in the pinnacles added in this period to the tower at All Saints.

<sup>14</sup> Mr Martin, the librarian of Woburn Abbey wrote extensively for Northamptonshire Mercury. He must have been a purist at heart, given his scathing comments.

*condition, but a modern wooden panelling very ugly, coloured in the same bad taste as the walls, concealed the sedilia".*

By all accounts, Mr Martin's observations were apt with parishioners and clergy alike as almost immediately, this alteration work was undone under the supervision of Bodley & Garner between 1885 and 1886. Newer, more humanistic pews (see figures 5 & 6 for comparisons - as we see them today) replaced the galleries, and the focus reorientated toward the nave, reflecting a renewed emphasis on the Sacraments([All Saints Preservation Trust, 2009](#)). Glass was replaced under the supervision of C.E Kemp (see Figures 14 and 17)<sup>15</sup>. The changes resulted from the more traditional style the Oxford Movement of George M Bodley and Thomas Garner preferred<sup>16</sup>. This work also included replacement of the worn buttresses and other repairs to the porches in 1888, 1891 and 1894, respectively. The spire was repointed in 1893. At the same time, the floor levels were altered. After that, little has been undertaken except maintenance and repair.

Following a fire in 1985, an extensive restoration program ensued under Paul Reynolds of H. A. Rolls & Partners([All Saints Preservation Trust, 2009](#)). The work included adding an upper storey to the vestries, creating a café in the north transept details to match the external parts, replacing the organ, bells and some glassware, creating the Good Samaritan Room<sup>17</sup>, and repairing work to St Hugh's Chapel. The Angel roofing was replaced and decorated to highlight their heavenly importance.

Given the above, it is hard not to recognise, as John Betjeman did ([Betjeman J, 1980](#)), that All Saints is "*the finest church in Bedfordshire, if not the country*".

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<sup>15</sup> C.E Kempe was the leading Victorian stained-glass artist of his time.

<sup>16</sup> It is said that Leighton Buzzard was very liberal suggesting why there is a large concentration of nondenominational churches in the town and why some objected to the overly High-Church decoration.

<sup>17</sup> The large Victorian window was created by Burlison and Grylles.



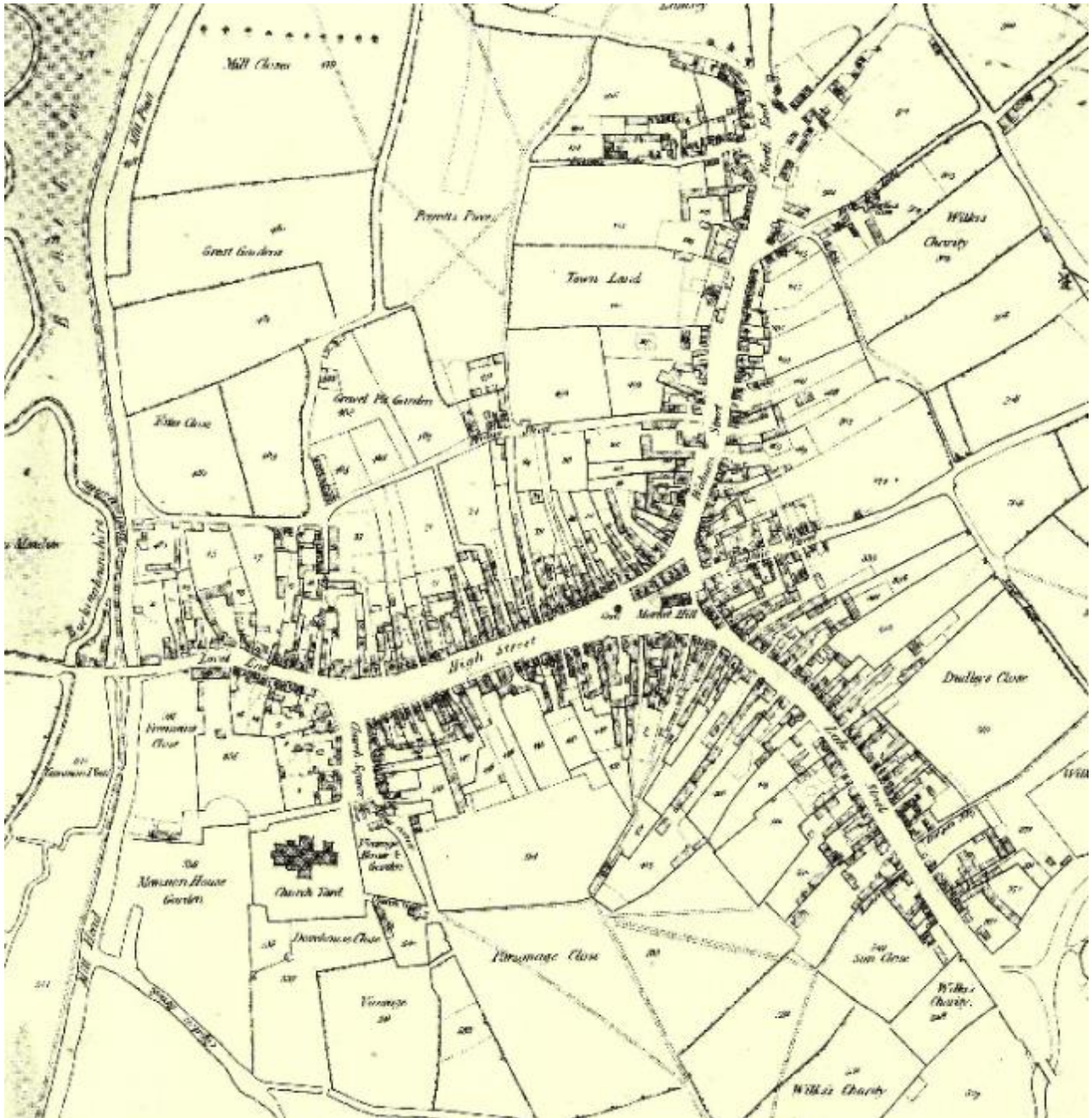


Figure 1 - OS Map 1807 ([Ordnance Survey, 2023a](#))



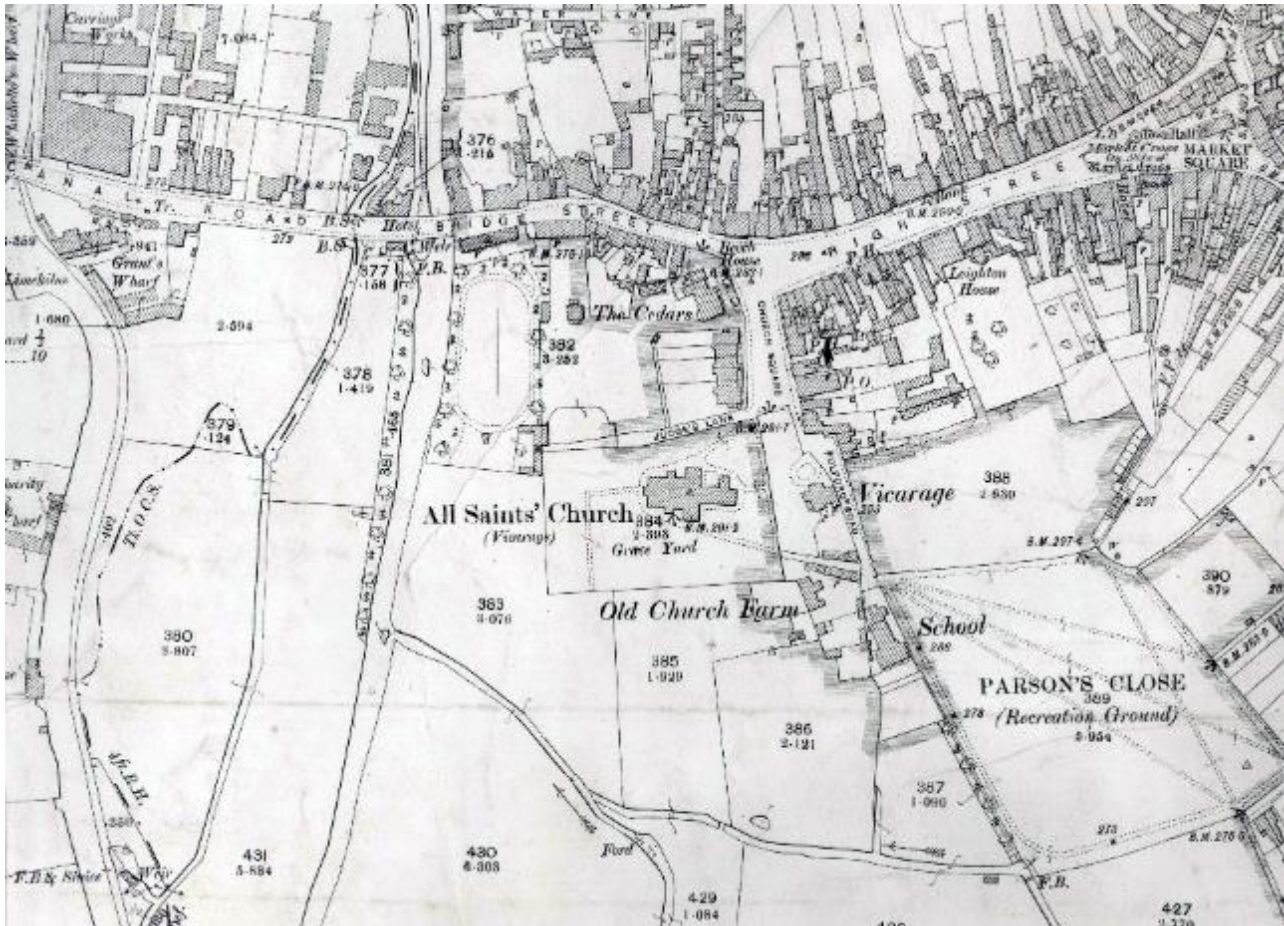


Figure 2 – OS Map 1875 ([Ordnance Survey, 2023b](#))

Urban Design context: Historic Assets



FIG. 2.17 Plan showing listed buildings and conservation areas, taken from the Baseline report



FIG. 2.18 Sketch showing the distribution of Historic patterns of development in Leighton Buzzard, taken from the Baseline report

- Key
- Listed buildings
  - Curtilages of listed buildings
  - Leighton Buzzard Conservation Area
  - Unslade Conservation Area
  - Unslade recent extension Conservation Area

Figure 3 - Map in the Leighton Buzzard Development Brief (NB: Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas - noting the historical context of the medieval core of the Town Centre and Church location) ([Central Bedfordshire Council, 2012](#))

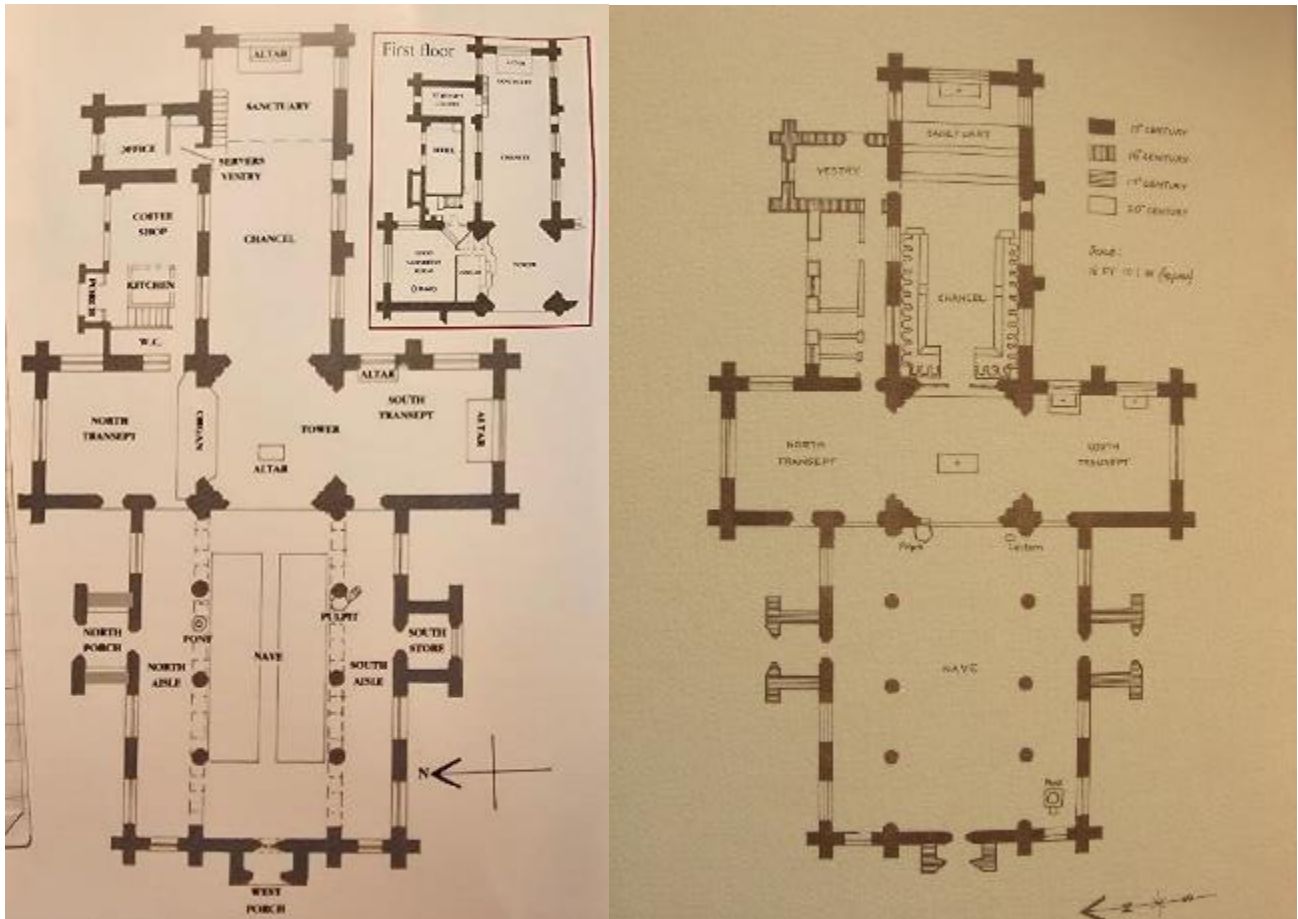


Figure 4 - Layout map of church & its development NB: The main construction of the cruciform structure and age of additions. ([All Saints Preservation Trust, 2009](#))



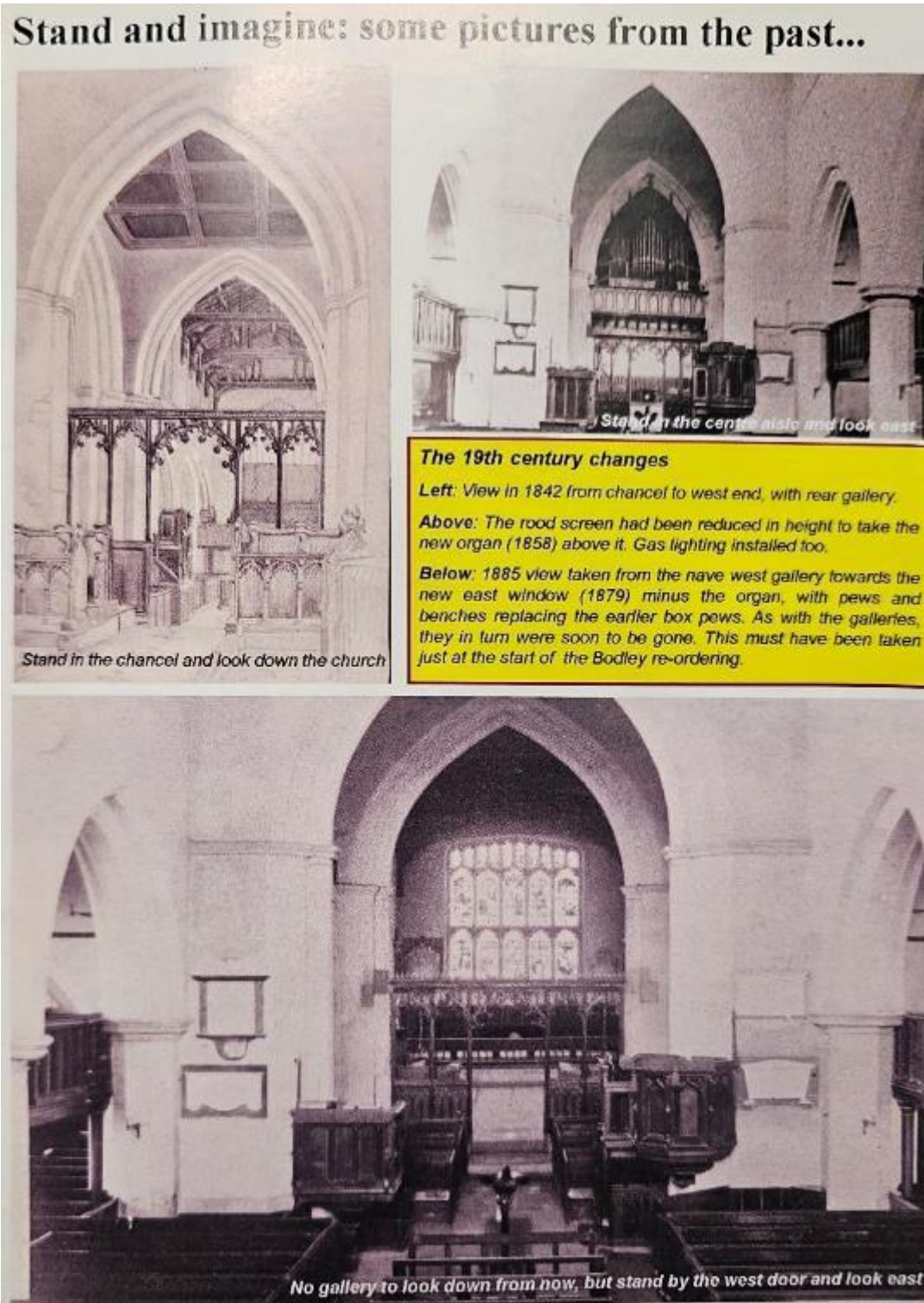


Figure 5 - Extract from All Saints pamphlet (pg 23) showing the 19th Century changes ([All Saints Preservation Trust, 2009](#)) NB the additional galleries in the transepts and new pulpits in the lower picture.

The illustration below, from about 1800, shows the higher rood screen, also box pews and gallery. Compare it with the view on page 4.



When King Charles II was restored to the throne in 1660, Parliament decided that the Arms of the King should be set up in churches. This was not compulsory, but indicated loyalty to the King as head of the Church in England. Leighton Buzzard certainly made that statement with its display!

With the raising of the ringing room floor to open up the complete crossing arch, the coat of arms had to be removed. In 1858 an organ was installed above the rood screen (see page 23). To accommodate it, the screen had to be lowered. Removal of post reformation text boards covering the screen revealed faded colourful decoration, some of which is still faintly visible today.

The organ was later moved to the south transept and then into the chancel as a choir organ with a case by Bodley. A new organ was installed on the north side of the crossing in the same place as today's modern instrument. Both earlier organs were destroyed in the fire.

Figure 6 - Pews in the 17th Century noted in abstract from *All Saints History Pamphlet* - note the contrast of features from figures 4 and 5. ([All Saints Preservation Trust, 2009](#))



Exterior



Figure 8 - Views of the church from afar and up-close. NB: 14 Church Square is now fronted by a row of Italianate Grade II Listed Georgian Houses, now offices.

Figure 8 - The north elevation.

NB: Several spot repairs in newer limestone and renewal of the buttresses. Note the difference in the doorways - new styles in the north porch and now main entrance adjacent to the northwest transept. Also, look at the texture of the materials. Above the entrance is the new 1980s infill to allow for the Cafe and the Chapel of the Good Samaritan.





Figure 9-- The western Elevation. Note the equidistant transects and porch additions. All buttresses had been replaced/repared. The graveyard to the west which was extended 4 times (and is full hence the mounding along the north elevation) and the main processional Western doorway which is relatively new but with original ironwork by Thomas de Leighton dated ca C15th.



Figure 910 10 - South and East Elevation. Note the grandiose Clerestory and windows are all in Perpendicular style. Note again that buttresses have been substantially repaired, tower heightened and altered with Gothic Revival pediments. Original roof form above south Transept and no battlement. new ones on the south porch (also compact nature of the material).





Figure 11– The north transept showing the small windows. These are modern additions post 198s fire with the remnants of the medieval glass inlaid within. All the glass was lost except these fragments.  
The above material pictures are examples of material repair, decay, and evidence of level changes.



Figure 13 -The new organ in the cross tower- behind which is the Chapel of the Good Samaritan. The original pulpit has been moved several times. The lectern and font. Both are relics from an earlier period. Note the rounded Romanesque design for the font (pre 13<sup>th</sup>C). The lectern is made from solid oak and elegantly carved (believed 15<sup>th</sup>C).



Figure 112 -The abundant graffiti dating back to various stages in the Church's history. The various flooring material ranges from early flagstones (found in the transepts and aisles) to diamond crossing flagstones to Victorian tilework (in the Chancery). NB: the timber flooring next to the pulpit.





Figure 13 - western entrance and nave, leading to the tower and southern transept. Note the pointed arches and light airy feel. The material is limestone throughout. Windows have all been cleaned and re-leaded following the fire of 1985. Many are Kemp originals albeit set within Perpendicular style tracery.



Figure 14 - the chancel and sanctuary - the oldest and sacred parts of the Church. These date from 13thC with modern embellishments. Note arch vaulting and tower ceiling HIS with flames.

NB: angle roofing, rood screen and position of original (set just back from the pillar behind the pews). Also, note the limewash walls and the 2 piscinæ and 3 sedilia seats.



Figure 15 - Left - These are the misericords. See the statuettes and fleur de lee detailing all from the 15<sup>th</sup> C.

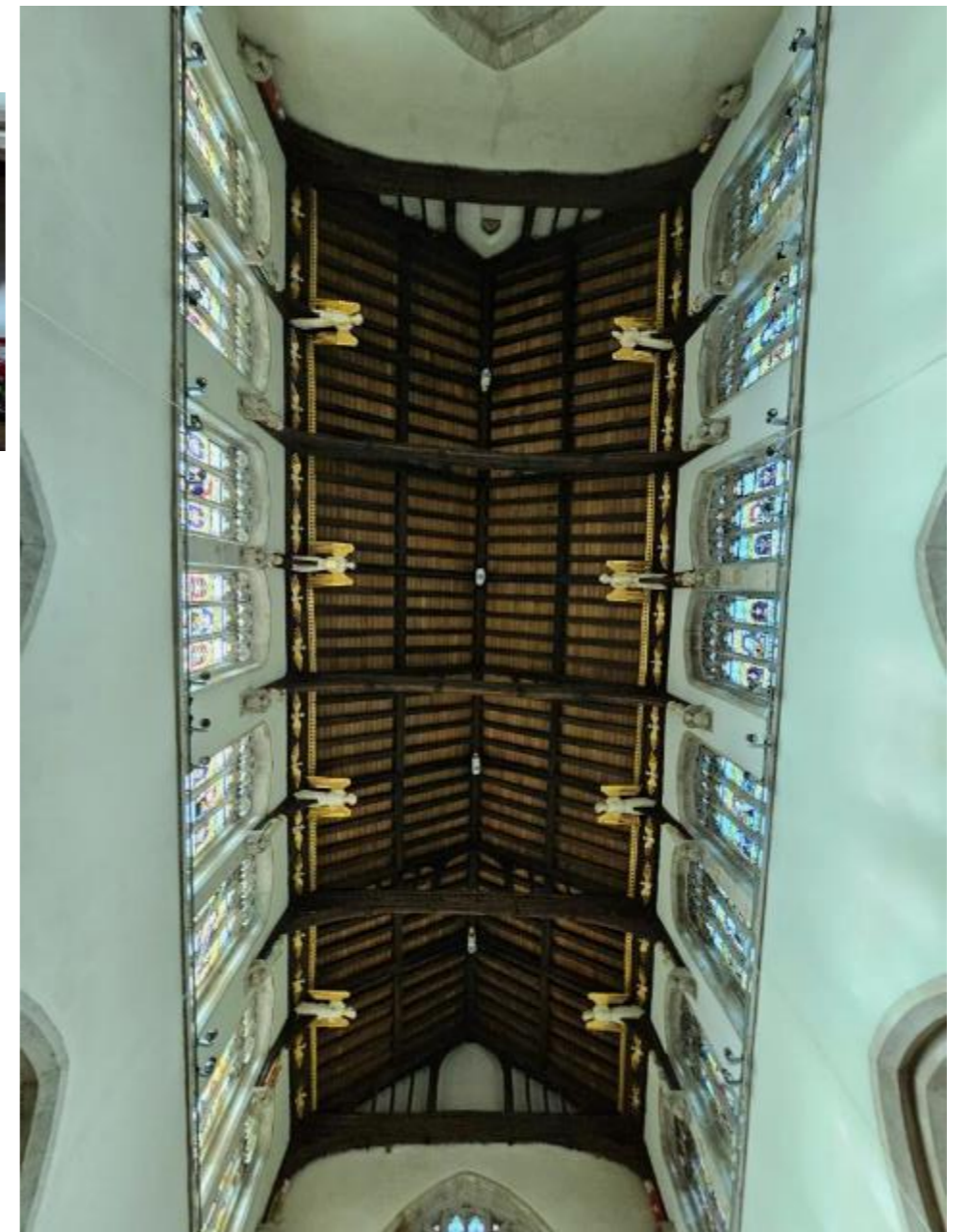


Figure 12 - the naive angle ceiling and clerestory



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