

St Nicholas Church in Old Marston

St Nicholas Parish Church is the oldest buildings in Old Marston and has been a central part in the life of the community for centuries. Below is a history of the church.

Overview

The first reference to the 'Chapel in Marston' is in 1122 when it is assigned to the Augustinian Canons of St. Frideswide. We can still see today part of the building work of the latter end of the C12th in the chancel arch, the arcade of the nave and the inner south door. This work was done when the church was endowed with land by the lord of the Manor of Headington. Further changes and additions continued in the 15th and 16th centuries. Very recently the vestry (built in 1977) has been enlarged.

By the right-hand side of the vestry door visitors can find a list of the clergy responsible for the church from 1210, beginning with Osbert, son of Hereward, to the present day, with just a gap between 1529 and 1637. The 16th century was a time of upheaval and religious change, but there is little evidence of how people reacted in Marston. The article on the Civil War records our knowledge of the effect on the church of the crisis of the English Civil War.

During the 18th and early part on the 19th century Marston had no resident vicar, but was served by various clerics from the university. In 1849, Canon Richard Gordon was appointed vicar here. He had been vicar of Elsfield since 1832, and continued to live there, whilst a curate took most of the services in Marston. The first incumbent to live in a vicarage here was the Revd John Mortimer, who came in 1904 to a house built for a comparatively wealthy Marston family, and stayed for 46 years. He was a keen musician and trained the school choir as well as that in the church. His life here is marked by Mortimer Road and Mortimer Hall. A purpose-built vicarage came later when Paul Rimmer was vicar.

Today, the church is at the heart of the village as it has been for almost 900 years. The interior and the graveyard are lovingly cared for by a willing team of volunteers, while the very active congregation play their full part in the community.

Taken from the history of St. Nicholas Church by Tony Kelly.

Printed in Marston Times January 2008

Land

The Lord of Headington Manor endowed the church with land at the end of the 1100s. Archbishop John Chichele endowed land in 1400s for rood light. Armorial tiles from period in chancel indicate connection with Chichele. The first main rebuilding took place during this time. The church and its possessions became part of Cardinal College (present day Christ

Church College). During the Reformation the endowment was withdrawn and the connection with St Frideswide's was broken.

A Guide to the Architectural Antiquities in the Neighbourhood of Oxford 1846

Marston Church = see 'A Guide to the Architectural Antiquities in the Neighbourhood of Oxford', Oxford Society for Promoting the Study of Gothic Architecture. Parker, Oxford 1846 [City Ref L] pp 185-188 ill.:

Ground plan; Sculpture over E. Window; dripstone termination; chancel door; arch south of Nave.

Last Sentence:

CROSSES: In the church-yard there was formerly a cross, which was taken down to mend the wall with in the year 1830; and in the village another cross, which was used about the same period to mend the roads with!

p188 (re Croke's house)

This house was pulled down in 1843

Early 20th Century Observations by Unknown Author

Area of Parish, 1160 acres. Population, 668.

The CHURCH:

Dedication—S. NICHOLAS. The Nave arcades and Chancel arch date from the 13th century and a transition Norman.

The Church was rebuilt in the Perpendicular style in the 15th century. It was thoroughly restored in 1882-3 • the work being carried out by Mr. John Honour, of Marston, under the superintendance of Mr. H. Drinkwater, the architect, and was re-opened for Divine Service after the restoration, on Thursday, December 6th, 1883, by the Bishop of Oxford. The then Vicar was the Rev. J. P. Smith.

A new open timber oak roof was built to the Chancel, the principals having carved braces as nearly as possible on the lines of the old roof and the spandrils being filled with tracery.

The roofs of the nave and aisles were stripped and renewed where necessary: the interior cleaned of many coats of whitewash and the plastering repaired: while the exterior was re-leaded and slated. Some remains of texts with borders of the time of Elizabeth or James I. were discovered, and an aumbrey at the east end of the north aisle.

The old seats were thoroughly restored, and in the chancel the old return stall desks have been retained with new stalls and a screen across the chancel arch.

The Jacobean pulpit was repaired, a new base was added to it and the canopy supported by a piece of wrought iron.

The East window was put in in the year 1903 by Miss Rippington, to the memory of Mrs. M. A. Cannon and other relatives. It was designed by Mr. F. C. Eden, of 3 Staple Inn, Holborn. The centre light has the Crucifixion for its subject; the right-hand light, St. Nicholas, the patron saint of the Church; and the left-hand light, St. John the Baptist. Some fragments of old glass have been skilfully inserted.

The side windows are of two lights, late Perpendicular. There are some good quarrels of painted glass in the heads of these windows. The recess of the first window on the south side is carried down to a stone bench which served as a seat for the priest, and eastward of this is a small square piscina with the basin and drain perfect.

There is a "hagioscope" or "squint" in the south aisle, enabling worshippers to see the Holy Table. The font is modern imitation Gothic. The Church possesses a chalice of early 14th century workmanship.

The MANOR HOUSE shown in the engraving was the seat of Unton Croke, Esq., a supporter of the Parliament in the Civil War, who acquired it by his marriage with Anne, daughter and heiress of Richard Hore, Esq., of Marston.

Here Oliver Cromwell received the surrender of Oxford in May, 1646. The right half has been rebuilt and forms a separate dwelling.

The CROSS was taken down and used to mend the roads. A similar Cross stood in the Churchyard and was taken down in 1830 to mend the wall.

The LIVING is in the gift of Mrs. Evans of Eton, widow of the late Master of Pembroke College, Oxford

The Bells

A western tower containing a ring of five bells; tenor 31 inches diameter, in C. The four smallest bells bear no inscriptions; the tenor is inscribed:

"THIS PEAL WAS RECAST BY W. & J.
TAYLOR OXFORD OCTR 17. 1823
JOHN CANNON & WILLIAM LEAKE C.W."

In the Walters' MS. at the Society of Antiquaries Library is a note stating: "The churchwardens' accounts here begin in 1529, and go down almost continuously except for a gap in the seventeenth century. I am however informed by Dr. G.N. Clark that there are no interesting entries at Marston, relating to the bells, merely small repairs, the earliest being in 1547. It

would seem that the predecessors of the present ring were either medieval bells, or else recast in the period 1620-1660".

6 Edw. VI Item 3 small belles in the steple and oon sanctus bell.

Visited: F.S. 12 th April 1930. Subsequently the bells were rehung with gear, type E, in a new oak frame by Mr. Richard White.

[ORS Frederick Sharpe, The Church Bells of Oxfordshire ii. XXX (1950)m 205]

Description Taken from 1932 Motoring Guide

The church of St Nicholas has quire, clerestoried nave, aisles, S. porch and a low embattle SW tower of perp. period. The porch has been rebuilt but retains the old stone seats, also the EE inner doorway. Note the archaic sculptured finials to the label, and a votive cross on the jamb. The quire has a mutilated piscina on the S. and the window sill is lowered for sedilia. The three-light E. window is Perp., as also the four of two lights N. and S., and the priest's door.

Note the old balustrade altar rails and two good sanctuary chairs. There are fragments of ancient glass in the windows. The imposts of the chancel arch indicate an original Norm. arch as they are of that period, but the present arch and jamb-shafts are E.E.

The nave arcades are late E.E., cylindrical pillars and rude octagonal moulded caps., but on the N. the bases appears to be earlier (Norm.). The clerestories are perp. The N. aisle has an aumbry. The E. window of three lights is early Perp. and has remains of old stained glass. The other window of nave is of three lights, perp. The S. aisle has a hagioscope, one two-light perp. There are traces of mural paintings on the pillars, arches, over S. door, and on E. wall of quire. Note the good Jacobean pulpit. The exterior of the priests' door on S., and the two windows should be noticed. The finials to the hood-moulds have a rebus on them.

[Bird, W. Hobart. Old Oxfordshire Churches. A concise guide, especially compiled for motoring folk and others... London. Ed. J. Burrow & Co. Ltd. [n.d.]. Forward dated February 1932]

Vicars of Marston

- c. 1210 Osbert son of Hereward (Heward)
- Pre-1263 Walter
- 1263 Richard
- 1264 Kytellus (Ketellus)
- 1273 William de Mercham
- Pre-1297 Adam de Wolford
- 1297 Stephen de Lynermene (Chaplain)
- 1304 Henry Brid (de Langgebergh)
- 1320 Roger de Undele
- 1324 Richard de Grafton
- 1330 Henry de Keten (Kettone)

- 1349 John de Bradeley (d. Black Death)
- 1349 Hugh de Wappenham
- 1361 William de Hedyngdon
- 1361 Hugo
- pre 1382 Richard de Morton
- 1397 Robert Kene (Kent)
- 1398 Adam Wylyyam
- 1407 Hugh de la Ryner
- 1407 Thomas Thornbury (Canon of St Frideswide's)
- 1423 Theobald Wynchester (Canon of St Frideswide's)
- 1424 John Henton
- pre 1460 Lewis ...
- 1460 Master William Dayfoot
- 1483 Master Richard Chauncellor
- 1484 Master Thomas Gilbert
- 1486 John London (Canon of St Frideswide's)
- 1529 Thomas Fylldar (Dominican)
- 1637 John Allen
- 1685 Francis Shaw
- 1686 Robert Holloway
- 1689 John Duke
- 1690 William Smith
- 1705 Robert Railton (Raylton)
- 1717 Joseph Stockwell
- 1728 CarewReynell
- 1734 William Thomas
- 1738 Thomas Berdmore
- 1742 William Burrough
- 1752 William Wright
- 1758 John Coxe
- 1771 Henry Macock
- 1804 Thomas Harward
- 1805 Thomas Henry Whorwood*
- 1835 James Peterson Chambers
- 1836 Thomas Henry Whorwood*
- 1849 Richard Gordon
- 1872 John Philip Smith
- 1888 Charles Morris
- 1899 Harvey Altham Cumberlege
- 1904 John Hamilton Mortimer
- 1952 Gordon David Savage
- 1957 Leslie Vandernoll Wright
- 1959 Paul Nathanael Rimmer
- 1991 Anthony Ronald Price
- 2017 Elizabeth Denno

In 1451 the benefices of Marston and Headington were united by a papal bull.

In 1637 Marston became a separate parish again on the representation of the Crown.

* These Vicars (father and son) were [Lords of the Manor of Headington](#). Thomas Henry Whorwood senior (who had appointed himself Vicar of Headington in 1804) also appointed himself Vicar of Marston in 1806, the year he succeeded his father as Lord and came to live in the Manor House in Osler Road. He held both posts until his death in 1835. He had originally intended that his eldest son of the same name should succeed him as Vicar of Headington and his younger son, William Henry, as Vicar of Marston; but the latter disgraced himself, and so Marston got the elder son instead (until he was appointed Vicar of Willoughby in Warwickshire in 1849).

William Peppercorn, who bought the Lordship of the Manor of Headington from Whorwood in 1849, may well have been connected to Messrs Peppercorn & Wilkinson, solicitors of St Neots in Huntingdonshire, who dealt with the sale of the Manor. He is listed in directories as one of the major landowners in Headington from about 1850, and the rent book of that year showed that he then owned the following land, some of which had been sold in the second sale of the manor in 1846: the 120-acre Manor Farm, a brickyard comprising 129 acres on the Marston Road (formerly Tilehouse Farm), and other smaller properties, such as a house and land of 35 acres on Headington Hill.

Peppercorn did not, however, own the Manor House or live in Headington.

Peppercorn remained Lord until the 1870s. By 1883 he was dead, and from that date until 1911 his Trustees are listed in directories as Lords of the Manor of Headington. On 20 May 1911 his Trustees auctioned the remnant of the manorial rights at the Golden Cross Hotel in Oxford. They were purchased by Colonel James Hoole, who thus became

Carol Services by Candlelight Began in Old Marston

Candlelight Caroling began at Old Marston (Oxford Mail 19th December 1966)

by Anthony Wood

In common with worshippers up and down with the country, the congregation of St Nicholas Church, Old Marston, joined last night in the Advent Festival of the Nine Lessons and Carols. But as they sang the traditional Christmas music and listened to the familiar scriptures by the golden glow of candles, I wonder how many of them realised that it was in their lovely 12th century church the first candlelight carol service was held 38 years ago (1928).

The idea was that of Rev. Howard Rose, who was Chaplain to the Oxford Pastorate at the time. In 1927 on Christmas Eve in New York, while visiting friends he had made during the First World War, he happened to attend a service at Calvary Episcopal Church.

"The Rector, the Rev. Samuel Shoemaker," he told me last night over the telephone from Lingfield – where he now lives in retirement – "has adopted the custom of bearing a big Yule candle into church in procession on Christmas Eve and presenting it to the person who has done the most for the parish during the year.

“But it struck me as I watched on this occasion how symbolic it was of the birth of Christ – the Coming of the Light of the World – so when I got back to England I mentioned it to the vicar of Old Marston, the Rev John Mortimer, whom I used to help during the vacation, and on Christmas Eve, 1928, we held the very first candlelight carol service in St Nicholas Church.” The form it took has been refined over the years but basically it is the same today as it was then. A chorister bears the Yule candle into the darkened church, then from its flame the clergy and sidesmen with tapers light other candles until nave and chancel glow with golden light.

When he became Vicar of Christ Church, Penge, Mr Rose introduced it there, then at Stanstead, then at Windermere, then at Ditchling. And in that way the service spread by word of mouth and imitation until today it is held in churches all over the world.

South India

The Rev. Paul Rimmer, first came across it in 1952 at Windermere when he became Mr. Rose’s curate and subsequently introduced it to South India when he went to serve the Church there in 1955.

But he didn’t have to reintroduce it to Old Marston when he became Vicar in 1959. He says: “After all those years I found it was still being held every year. The symbolism, I’m afraid had been lost. They just put candles round the wall and held the service in a lighted church. “Nonetheless, it hadn’t died out and it was a simple matter to restore the Christmas message, to demonstrate by the lighting of the candles how Christ brought the light of the Gospel into the world.”

The service isn’t quite as impressive as the one Mr. Rose finally evolved at Ditchling, his last living.

There a star remained alight over the crib in the darkened church. Kissing boughs decorated with mistletoe and rosy red apples – a traditional part of the Christmas scene long before Prince Albert introduced the Christmas tree in 1841 – supported the candles.

“They’re terribly fiddly and take an awful long time to make,” says Mr. Rimmer apologetically. And as the worshippers left after the service they looked out over a wall across a field to a farmyard where was enacted a living tableau of the Nativity Scene.

But such shortcomings didn’t bother Mr. Rose when I rang him last night. He was delighted to hear I had enjoyed the service and only sorry he had not been able to arrange something similar in one of the churches around Lingfield.

“Unfortunately, I left it too late,” he said. “But I shall certainly do something next year. And in 1968 – God willing – I am looking forward to celebrating the 40th anniversary of candlelight service with my(missing paragraph).

Old Marston Bell Ringers

St. Nicholas has had bells and a band to chime or ring them for many years. In the 19th century five bells were installed in the tower. This meant that an organised band with a leader was needed. Thus Marston started a regular band, similar to the one we have today.

Unfortunately, the number of ringers in the Oxford area dwindled between 1914 and 1945. Although efforts to recruit started in 1944, it wasn't until the arrival of Alec Gammon that things began to improve. Alec was a member of the Oxford Society and the Oxford Guild, as well as a method ringer. Marston, being a call change band, did not have Guild members. When the Revd. Gordon Savage arrived, a society, based on St. Nicholas Church was founded to train bell-ringers and to provide ringers for services when required. The officers at that time were: Roy Jones (Captain), Bill Brain and Christine Woodward (vice captains) and Alec Gammon (secretary). The society joined the Oxford Guild and became a member of the City Branch. It became the leading five bell tower in the world. It is now a six bell one!

In 1972 a sixth bell was added and the platform was built so that a vestry could be established. The short ropes falling easily to hand and the light ring (6cwt) make excellent teaching and learning facilities. The society is involved in teaching at other towers and in providing ringers or bands to ring for special occasions as well as serving at towers around Oxford on a regular basis.

Outings, visits and other activities are provided throughout the year as well as week-end or week ringing occasions. If you think you might be interested in joining the society and learning the art of change ringing and are over ten years of age, then arrange to visit a practice evening between 7.15 p.m. and 8 p.m. on a Friday by contacting Hugh Deam Tel: 247574, or visit the tower on a Sunday between ringing and service time. You do not have to take part, but it is an easy way to make new friends. Change ringing does not require brute strength, so anyone can learn, as an individual or in a group. More females have been ringers at Marston than males! [You can find out more by going to their website.](#)

Rev John Mortimer's Induction Sermon

Induction sermon preached by the Rev. C. E. Prior, Rector of Charlton-on-Otmoor and Rural Dean of Islip, on the occasion of the Induction of the Rev. J. H. Mortimer as Vicar of Marston, January 26th, 1905.

"I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel ; thou shall hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me." Ezekiel xxxiii, 7.

An Induction is a very simple ceremony which places a minister in full possession of the possessions and privileges of his living. The act is symbolical of his taking over the control. The spiritual charge is given by the bishop. I have no power to do that, nor any authority to do more than offer a brother my sincere good wishes for the success of his ministry.

Yet the presence of a number of parishioners gives this rite a spiritual significance. It is their welcome, and where better could that be given than in the church? Here he will baptise, teach, celebrate the Holy Communion, offer prayer and praise and words of repentance for and with his parishioners. He will bless your marriages, and say the last words over you at the grave. But the connexion goes far beyond that. In the passage from Jeremiah we have read, he is -spoken of as a watchman, who shall receive the word from God, and warn His people from Him. Those who are warned are themselves responsible for the use they make of the warning. How strongly and deeply was this thought of mutual responsibility present to Samuel in early days and to St. Paul in later ones. Samuel in his farewell address to the people of Israel vindicates himself from having failed in his duty. St. Paul in his address to the elders of Ephesus, reminds them of his continued efforts for their spiritual welfare, and claims to have kept back nothing from them. But when we have done our best, it rests with others to listen to or to disregard our message.

There are other figures under which the ministerial office is described in the Bible. He is likened to the fisherman seeking by patient toil to catch the souls of men. He is likened to the husbandman laboriously cultivating his plot of land. He is a steward of the heavenly mysteries, distributing to each their meat in due season. But the most beautiful as well as the most familiar similitude is that by which the minister is described as shepherd or pastor of his flock. The intimate and tender relation which this term implies surpasses any other almost on earth. For God is our Shepherd, the Shepherd of us all. To some He has given the privilege of being His under-shepherds on earth. In this land there is someone in that relation to each man, woman, and child. But in all these expressions we must remember that a dual responsibility exists. There must be not only zeal, patience, love on the one side. There must be on the other readiness, and there must be zeal, patience and love too. The duties do not lie all on one side. We welcome sincere advice, we do not expect to escape criticism, but we want to be met with genuine help and sympathy. The work of the Church can never be the work of the priesthood only : it is the work of the laity too. The Bible and the Prayer Book are to be our guides and rule, but they were never intended for the clergy only. There are beliefs and duties just as binding on laymen as on us. The Church can never do her work till this is remembered. We do not ask for capricious patronage, but for real co-operation, and sharing of the burden, and that I pray you are going to give.

All of us are sorry to lose your late vicar. His great gifts, his kind and liberal disposition, his earnest and self-denying labours are well-known, and made his loss felt far beyond the limits of his parish. And your new vicar is no stranger to you. He has worked in this immediate neighbourhood. He has studied the Pastoral Art at the best of theological colleges, I mean that at Wells. He is about to give his energies to the work of a large and increasing parish, and one like all suburban, parishes of peculiar difficulty. There is no large temptation about the office, apart from its spiritual attractions to draw one. I do venture to hope that a great, and united effort on the part of all may be made to carry on the good work that has been begun here. That loyalty and postponement of merely personal feelings which we find so necessary in worldly things should be shown in the great cause of all, the cause of Jesus Christ and the Kingdom of God. In the chapter of St. Peter which we have read he bids his fellow-elders to feed the flock of God. which is among them; and he adds, ' All of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility.' In conclusion he adds this blessing, " The God of all grace, Who hath called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a

while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you. To Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

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Historic Churches: Marston on the Mud (Oxford Mail date unknown)

OLD Marston, on the fringe of Oxford—it is the last parish which the Cherwell skirts on its eastern bank before reaching the City — is still a village, and an attractive one at that. A tide of red brick and concrete presses round it like the enveloping flanks of a besieging army, threatens to engulf it, and pins it against the undulating ribbon of the Northern By-Pass, beyond which are the unspoilt woody hills and meadows of a charming countryside. But in spite of modern encroachment and the building of the by-pass, it is still a quiet place, with a winding main street, old, inns, thatched cottages, and above all that which is its chief glory, the ancient church of St. Nicholas, in its pleasantly secluded corner, with a delightful little tavern tucked away even more remotely at the end of a lane behind the graveyard. Marston is first heard of in the 12th century. but there is no doubt of its Anglo-Saxon origin, for its name means "Marsh Town," and that it most certainly was.

Under Water

Indeed, for hundreds of years it must have been an island in the middle of acres of marshland through which the river meandered, with some of the land across the boundary into Elsfield under water nearly all the year round. And less than 50 years ago a local wag could write this jingle:

*O who would live at Marston, at Marston, on the mud,
Surrounded by the water, like Noah in the flood;
For those who live at Marston have water in their veins,
Water in their beer jugs, water in their brains.*

Only one family of outstanding note ever made the village their home— the Crokes — whose connection began with a rising young lawyer, Unton Croke, in the reign of James I, whose wife, Anne Hore, brought him a good deal of land and property there which became the Manor and he Marston's leading inhabitant. He was also committed to the Parliamentary cause in the Civil War, and his home became their headquarters when the siege of Oxford started in 1645, with both Cromwell and Fairfax there. and it was in the same house that the surrender of the city was negotiated the following year. After those momentous events the village relapsed into its former placidity, and by 1801 the leading resident was Mine Host of the White Hart, whose hospitable doors are still open, combining with the licensed trade, those of farmer and baker.

But Marston has one more claim to fame. About 150 years ago the sporting parson, Jack Russell, stopped in the village on his way to Elsfield and bought what he considered to be "the perfect fox terrier," a little bitch, "Trump," from which comes the best of the famous Jack

Russell breed. This event has been suitably commemorated only comparatively recently in the name of a new public house.

Despite all its shortcomings Marston has much to be thankful for. Headington, to which it was united by a Papal Bull for nearly 200 years, is now merely a suburb of Oxford, and so now is that part of it which was taken away to form, New Marston when the city extended its boundaries in 1929. And St. Nicholas is still essentially a village church; the centre of a real and friendly community.

Churchyard

It stands in a trim churchyard, the graves shaded by ancient yews, near a corner which is still known as "The Cross," which recalls the days when the village cross stood there. It has been there for seven centuries; belonging first of all to the Priory of St. Frideswide, with which it was linked until the Dissolution of the monasteries when, in the fullness of time, it passed to Christ Church. Throughout the years the church has been served by a variety of clergy including Canons of St. Frideswide's (it was during their regime that a complaint was made that a woman and two girls were living in the vicar's house), Dominican friars, priests appointed by the Crown, Fellows of Oxford colleges who rode out on Sundays to take the services, and even a vicar of neighbouring Elsfield.

These were at last succeeded by a succession of devoted pastors, among whom in recent years have been the late Rev. J. H. Mortimer, who combined a deep affection for his people with an unrivalled knowledge of railways, and the Rev. Gordon Savage, now Bishop of Southwell.

Now there is the Rev. Paul Rimmer ministering to the faithful, who came from the Church of South India seven years ago, and it is a measure of his success that one of the major problems with which he is faced is that the seating is inadequate, particularly at festivals. And here, at the entrance, the Vicar has hung a beautifully-illuminated welcome—words of the Lady Julian of Norwich—"Our courteous Lord willeth we should be as homely with Him as heart may think or soul desire." "But let us beware that we take not so recklessly His homeliness as to leave courtesy."

The Plantagenet dynasty were reigning in England when the oldest parts of the building — the chancel arch, the arches of the nave arcades, on their low, round pillars and the south door—were built. Two hundred years later the first great restoration took place, leaving the building much the same as it is today. At the beginning of the 16th century, when it was reported that the chancel was out of repair, considerable work was carried out and there was the inevitable Victorian restoration, fortunately far less ruthless than in so many other places. Among the changes which were carried out then was the removal of the gallery at the west end, under the tower, and when this was replaced only a few years ago as a memorial to the late Prof. Vincent Harlow, churchwarden and lay-reader, it was found that it fitted almost exactly into the recesses where the older one had been.

Handsome

When the organ was re- moved here, the south aisle with its “squint” through which worshippers could see the priest officiating at the altar, was transformed into a chantry chapel, which it had been years before. Its furnishings, which include the original touch of a splendid tester over the altar, show how modern craftsmanship can be most successfully blended with the old.

The main altar-table is Jacobean, like the handsome pulpit, from which successive vicars, resident and non –resident, have expounded the Scriptures for well over 300 years, and behind it, the magnificent east window, still containing a good deal of ancient glass.

In another window nearby is what the vicar describes to young visitors as “the original Beatle” – a man of the time of Henry LL playing the lute. This is, too, Unton Croke’s resplendent memorial tablet, designed, it is said, by the brother of the man who build Chequers, now the country home of England’s Prime Ministers, and on the other side of the chancel, the more lowly brass commemorating his wife Anne. At the east end are some interesting old tiles, bearing the arms of Archbishop Chichele, similar to some discovered in the Latin Chapel of Christ Church which was formerly St. Frideswide’s Priory.

An early benefactor of church was John Chichele whom it would seem was a kinsman of the founder All Souls, for there is no record of any connection between church and college. But the greatest treasure of all is the Marston Chalice, the oldest in the Church England still in use in this country, which was a gift from a wealthy Oxford butcher named Skydmore, and thought to have been used originally for secular purposes.

There are, too, still signs of the medieval mural paintings which at one time covered the walls, and over the chancel arch are traces of three, superimposed one on the other; it is hoped some time to be able to restore the earliest.

As always there is so much to do, the money to be raised from people who have to make a real effort to give, and there are priorities to be observed.

Splendid

Inside and out the church is in splendid condition, particularly as it is built of Headington stone, which wears so badly amidst the grime of towns. Since the war much been done. Ten years ago the exterior was restored, so well that it belies its age, the tower was strengthened and the roof renovated cost of nearly £3,500. Unfortunately, it was found later that the gas central heating had set up a chemical reaction which affected the lead on the roof and the rain poured in. As a result, more cash to be raised to replace this and do other work which, it is hoped will stop the damage from recurring in the future.

ST. NICHOLAS at Old Marston is the last in present series of article on historic churches Oxfordshire. We hope that they have fulfilled the hope of Sir Douglas Veale, chairman of the Oxfordshire Historic Appeal Committee in his introduction to the first article and brought home to readers how rich Oxfordshire is in churches of great beauty and interest.

Written by John Owen, Picture by J. R. V. Johnson, Article in Oxford Mail (or Times) Date unknown (possible mid 60s)

The church of St Nicholas was dedicated to the patron saint of sea-farers, pawn-brokers, children and all people in trouble. It was first mentioned in 1122 when Henry I granted the chapel of Marston to the canons of St Frideswide's. (*Newbiggin/Wood*)

Victoria Observer

Area of Parish, 1160 acres. Population, 668.

The CHURCH. Dedication—S. NICHOLAS. The Nave arcades and Chancel arch date from the 13th century and a transition Norman.

The Church was rebuilt in the Perpendicular style in the 15th century. It was thoroughly restored in 1882-3 • the work being carried out by Mr. John Honour, of Marston, under the superintendence of Mr. H. Drinkwater, the architect, and was re-opened for Divine Service after the restoration, on Thursday, December 6th, 1883, by the Bishop of Oxford. The then Vicar was the Rev. J. P. Smith.

A new open timber oak roof was built to the Chancel, the principals having carved braces as nearly as possible on the lines of the old roof and the spandrels being filled with tracery. The roofs of the nave and aisles were stripped and renewed where necessary: the interior cleaned of many coats of whitewash and the plastering repaired: while the exterior was re-leaded and slated. Some remains of texts with borders of the time of Elizabeth or James I. were discovered, and an ambry at the east end of the north aisle.

The old seats were thoroughly restored, and in the chancel the old return stall desks have been retained with new stalls and a screen across the chancel arch.

The Jacobean pulpit was repaired, a new base was added to it and the canopy supported by a piece of wrought iron.

The East window was put in in the year 1903 by Miss Rippington, to the memory of Mrs. M. A. Cannon and other relatives. It was designed by Mr. F. C. Eden, of 3 Staple Inn, Holborn. The centre light has the Crucifixion for its subject; the right-hand light, St. Nicholas, the patron saint of the Church; and the left-hand light, St. John the Baptist. Some fragments of old glass have been skilfully inserted.

The side windows are of two lights, late Perpendicular. There are some good quarrels of painted glass in the heads of these windows. The recess of the first window on the south side is carried down to a stone bench which served as a seat for the priest, and eastward of this is a small square piscina with the basin and drain perfect.

There is a "hagioscope" or "squint" in the south aisle, enabling worshippers to see the Holy Table. The font is modern imitation Gothic. The Church possesses a chalice of early 14th century workmanship.

The MANOR HOUSE shown in the engraving was the seat of Unton Croke, Esq, a supporter of the Parliament in the Civil War, who acquired it by his marriage with Anne, daughter and heiress of Richard Hore, Esq., of Marston. Here Oliver Cromwell received the surrender of Oxford in May, 1646. The right half has been rebuilt and forms a separate dwelling. The CROSS was taken down and used to mend the roads. A similar Cross stood in the Churchyard and was taken down in 1830 to mend the wall.

The LIVING is in the gift of Mrs. Evans of Eton, widow of the late Master of Pembroke College, Oxford.