



A Tour of St. Michael's Church

There has been a church at Aldbourne certainly since the Domesday Book and probably earlier. It is reasonable to assume that Norman features incorporated in the church are from an 11th or 12th century church on the same site.

The architecture of St. Michael's is Gothic. The nave and the chancel are 13th century, the clerestory and roof imposed upon the nave are 15th century as are the crossing, the transepts, Lady Chapel, vestry, porch and tower.

The church was restored in the 1860's by the eminent Victorian architect, William Butterfield. Between 1988 and 1990 major redecoration took place, much of the work undertaken by parishioners is the continuing care of this large building and churchyard.

NAVE

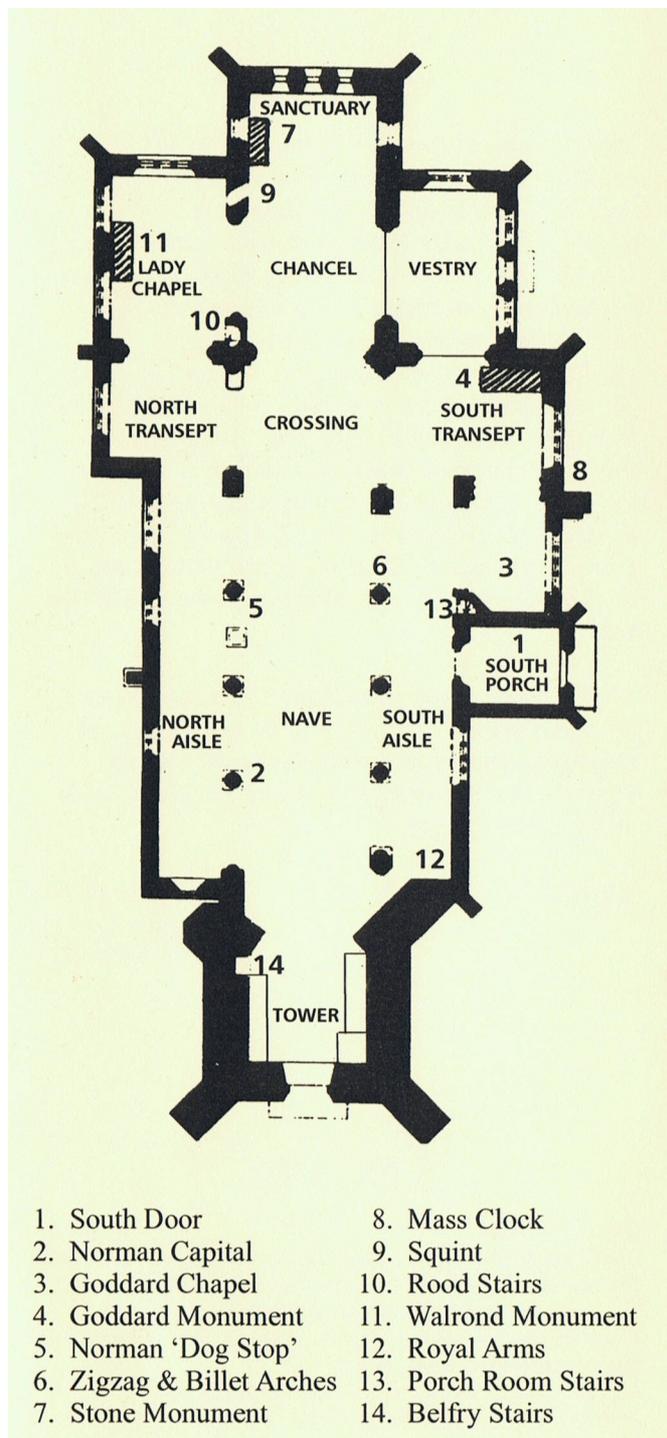
The double-chamfered, pointed arches and the supporting cylindrical piers on square footings are 13th Century. There are Norman features taken from an earlier church; for instance the zig-zag billet decoration of uniform radius on three of the arches on the south side have been removed from Norman round arches and applied ill-fittingly to the pointed Gothic arches; the head of a dog between the arches near the font, and the scalloped capital crowning the western pier on the same side are also Norman. The pews date from the 1860's restoration.

CLERESTORY AND ROOF

The upper stage of the main walls of the nave, the clerestory, with its six windows and flat timbered roof are 15th century and date from a major enlargement of the church undertaken by the Goddard family between 1450 and 1500. Note the carving of the corbels supporting the braces of the roof.

FONT

The octagonal font is 17th century, probably cut from an earlier, circular bowl.



AISLES

The aisles with square headed windows were added in the 15th century.

CROSSING AND TRANSEPTS

The crossing and transepts date from the 15th century's enlargement of the church.; the massive piers and the soaring, acutely pointed arches are typical of the Perpendicular style. The crossing probably replaced 13th century arches supporting a central tower. The Victorian choir stalls in the North Transept have been removed from the Chancel.

THE LADY CHAPEL

The lady Chapel , 15th century, was the chantry chapel of the Guild of the Fraternity of the Blessed Virgin Mary; here were said prayers for the dead. The chantry chaplain saying Mass was able to see into the chancel through the squint and thus elevating the Host, the bread consecrated in the Mass at the same moment that it was being elevated by the priest at the High Altar. A brass commemorating Henry Frekylton, chantry chaplain, who died in 1508, is now protected by the chancel floor, but there is a rubbing of the brass in the Lady Chapel.

THE WALROND MONUMENT

The Walrond Monument to two brothers who died in 1614 and 1617 is in classical Renaissance style and the inscriptions are in English, Latin and Greek. The brothers were related to the Goddard family. The stairs within the main chancel pier probably led to the original tower, and were adapted to give access to the screen which closed the Chancel from the Nave and from which the Gospel was read.

THE CHANCEL

The Chancel is 13th century, greatly altered in the 15th and 19th centuries. It was entirely the priest's preserve, and here with the High Altar, its surrounding Sanctuary, and behind it the decorated Reredos. It is now sparsely furnished and the Jacobean altar, which can be moved, is closer to the Nave and congregation, in line with current liturgical practice.

The lancet window on the south side is 13th century; the three lancet windows at the

east end date from the 1860's restoration and replaced a large perpendicular window. The stained glass windows are a memorial to Canon Cleather and his wife; he was responsible for the 1860's restoration. The fine incised alabaster topped tomb is that of John Stone, Vicar, 1473-1510, wearing full Mass vestments.

THE PULPIT

In the 1860's the Jacobean Pulpit was brought from Speen Church, where the headboard remains.

THE SOUTH TRANSEPT

The South Transept and adjoining area, with its fine decorated arch, is known as the Goddard Chapel. The monument at the east end with the Goddard emblem is more pagan than Christian in design. The six separated unidentified figures were probably brought from elsewhere and placed on the tomb which, with its two niches, seems designed for only two figures. The tomb replaced a medieval altar and partly hides, on the south wall, the piscina, the stone basin for washing the chalice and paten used during the Mass. The brass in the floor nearby commemorates Richard Goddard and his wife Elizabeth who died in 1492. Richard Goddard of Upham House is believed to be the 15th century benefactor of the church. It is likely that his tomb was in this chapel, and that the brass was part of it.

THE SOUTH DOOR

The south door which has been considerably restored, has a Norman arch. The porch, 15th Century, originally had a room above, access to which was by stairs, now blocked, behind the cupboard door within the church.

WALL PAINTING

The wall painting high above the pillars to the west in the south aisle is all that remains of the medieval decoration. The rosettes and pattern have been repeated in the recent redecoration, as have the medieval colours.

ROYAL ARMS

The Royal Arms which once hung at the Chancel Arch, are those of Queen Anne; they include the lion of Scotland and therefore post-date the Union of England and Scotland in 1707. They denote the Royal Supremacy claimed by Henry VIII.

FIRE PUMPS

The fire pumps are in the church for safe keeping and preservation.

TOWER

The tower, 15th century, is joined to the nave by a high perpendicular buttress and arch. It has a fine west window.

EIGHT BELLS

There are eight bells, the oldest of which are dated 1510 and 1516 both commemorating Richard Goddard, the church's benefactor, and his two wives. Three of the bells were cast in the village in the 18th century.