

ST MATTHEW'S
H A R W E L L



'If these stones could speak'
The story of 1000 years of parish life
in Harwell

Get to know our historic building at the heart of the Harwell community and with enduring links across the Atlantic

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Preface to the 1990 edition by then Rector, Chris Stott, with a remark by current Rector, Jeremy Parsons.

"It is a delight and sometimes most moving to worship in such an old and beautiful church. Here you sense the unchanging nature of our God who was, and is, and is to come. An unchanging God in a very changing world. Here saints and sinners alike have worshipped God for centuries. Here people have turned to God in sorrow or tragedy and found comfort, support and help.

Here young and old have found Christ the Saviour of the world. The reality of the crucified and risen Lord has come home to people as the Word of God has been read or preached; as hymns, psalms or songs have been sung; or as the bread and wine have been shared. From here people have been sent out into the world in the power of God's Spirit to live and work to his praise and glory.

Here fellowship has been shared within a Christian community. For a church is much more than a building. It is essentially a community of the followers of Jesus of Nazareth, through whom we can find and know God.

Our prayer is that in this special place you, too, may be drawn into the presence and love of God and come to worship and wonder."

The words of my predecessor are as relevant today as when they were first written by Chris 35 years ago. We are delighted to be able to keep our church open to passers-by and visitors (often from far afield) when many churches, through lack of resources or due to security fears, are unable to do so. It is important that St Matthew's is always accessible and that we remain at the very heart of our parish and village community. I do hope you enjoy your visit to St Matthew's today.

Father Almighty, maker of Heaven and Earth, set up your Kingdom in our midst. Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, have mercy on me a sinner. Holy Spirit, breath of the living God, renew me and all the world. Amen.

Jeremy Parsons 2025

Welcome in!

Construction and history



St Matthew's stands on slightly raised ground next to Prince's Manor Farm to the East.

The stream to the West (at the bottom of the long path on your left as you stand facing the porch) rises in Wellshead, now a residential area.

The church was mainly built in the 13th century and has rubble walls of hard grey stone, or 'clunch', covered with plaster on the inside and with roughcast – a traditional wall covering for durability – on the outside.

It used to be dedicated to St Mary. We do not know when it was rededicated to St Matthew.

You are *always* welcome here (jb)

The South side (the main door)

The church is close to the natural spring or 'well' which gives the village its name (*see page 26*) and its church size reflects the fact that there was a considerable population in the village, which was originally on the main Wallingford to Wantage road.

You have entered through the porch. Porches became a universal aspect of the English parish church in the 14th century. One possible context was the falling out between King John and Pope Innocent III in 1208 when the Pope issued an interdict which closed all churches, forbade the celebration of sacraments and the burial of the dead in sanctified ground.

This situation lasted until 1214. The people were locked out of their church and an essential aspect of the community life was taken away – a national crisis that affected every single person in the parish. Certain rituals, such as marriage, could, however, be enacted at the church door, and so the building of a porch for those attending these rituals to stay dry in the rain was a good idea.

Porches were also in use for anyone excommunicated – that is, not allowed inside the church – for not taking Communion or saying Confession at least once a year. The low benches of a typical church porch enabled anyone who had been excommunicated to still be near the sacred space and hear what was being enacted within.

Look around the immediate area where you enter the church. We will take you on a tour of other areas of note a little later in this booklet.

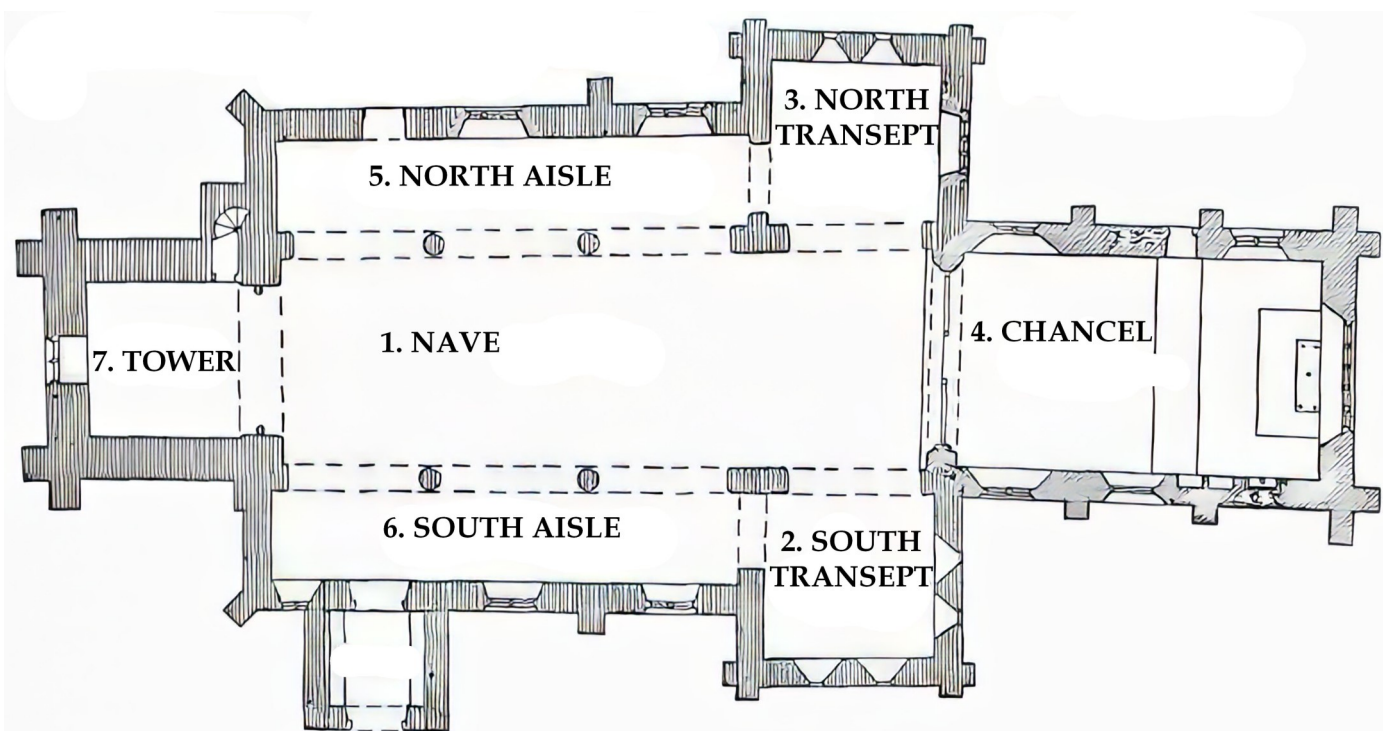
On your left is a tub-shaped font which may have survived from the earliest church here or have been installed in the 1200s when the tower was built. Behind the font at floor level is a stone coffin lid placed here in 1963. The coffin was found beneath the North side of the nave, (the main part of the church) around the area of the Harewell window which you will see shortly. Details on the coffin indicate it to be from the late 12th century.

It was left in situ but the lead-tin alloy chalice (Communion cup) from 1180 – 1280 which was inside the coffin was removed. It is on loan to Christ Church Cathedral Museum in Oxford. The coffin belonged to a priest, possibly Stephen of Harwell who was Rector of the parish between about 1212 and 1220). It was a widespread practice to inscribe the coffin lid with a cross and to bury a chalice with them.

12th century chalice (ar-m)



In the 11th and 12th centuries there were both a chancel (where the altar is located) and a nave (the main body of the church) without aisles. Some foundations of this original layout were found in 1963 – when the floors in the nave, aisles and transepts (that is, the areas which, if you were to look at the church from above, are the ‘arms’ of the Cross-shape) were renewed – as can be seen on the drawing overleaf.



The building of St Matthews (figures indicate the route in this booklet). Base plan published in <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/berks/vol3/pp484-492#h3-s4>

The first church was an 'estate' or 'field' church built by the owner of the manor that later became known as Princes' Farm. It was probably built in the 11th century. Priests would have visited to say mass and conduct burials from nearby minster churches, perhaps Dorchester on Thames or Abingdon on Thames.

In the Domesday Survey, a chapel is mentioned (*see an extract of this in the section on page 28*) and, in 1074, a dwelling and certain tithes – traditionally a tenth of earnings or income taken as a tax for the support of a church – were granted to the Chapel of St George in the newly-built castle at Oxford. These 'taxes' had previously been reserved for the upkeep of the church and the care of the poor of the parish. In 1149 the benefit from these taxes was transferred to Osney Abbey, also in Oxford. The design and architectural details of much of the present St Matthew's were probably influenced by monasteries, such as Osney, of the Augustinian Order.

The church has always been connected with the Upper Manor of Harwell which was granted by William the Conqueror (1028 – 1087) to Robert d'Oily who in turn gave it, with others in Oxfordshire, to Roger d'Iveri. The Barony which formed as a result was centred on Beckley in the North of Oxfordshire. When that line died out, the Barony was passed to

the family of St Valery. During the 13th century, various freeholders owned the Manor, the most notable of whom being Sir Jocelyn Balliol and his descendants who owned approximately 750 acres in Harwell. Bayloll's Manor, otherwise known as Middle Farm, a private home, still stands on the High Street at the corner of Grove Road.

In 1231 the Barony was given (along with that of Wallingford) to King Henry III's brother, Richard, Earl of Cornwall. His son Edmund received it after his death. Edmund appointed Rectors to St Mary's/St Matthew's who included Roger de Drayton (1276 – 1292) and a Keeper of his Wardrobe, Roger de Marlowe (1292 – 1310), known for his letters which have survived and are now published. Walter de London took over until 1349 but did not live in the village as he was Rector of several other places in southern England as well. You can see a list of all the Rectors and Curates of St Mary's/St Matthew's on the wall to your left if you are still standing near the entrance to the church.

Between 1359 and 1361, the Black Prince (the eldest son and heir to King Edward III of England, who had a castle at Wallingford) increased the endowments payable to the College of St Nicholas in the Castle. This was to pay for one dean, six priests, six clerks (another type of priest) and four choristers for daily divine service. The money came from the tithes which would have gone to the Rector of St Mary's/St Matthew's, and the Upper Manor, and additionally included the right to appoint a Rector to St Mary's/St Matthew's. Edward the Black Prince died before he could become king. Upper Manor thus acquired the name "Prince's Manor."

The College of St Nicholas was suppressed in 1548 and the Loder family, who were tenants of Manor Farm, bought the Manor and the right to appoint clergy (known as the advowson) in 1557.



For more on the Loders and their significance in the village and as ancient forerunners of what is now known as agronomics, please see the website **Village for a Thousand Years** (<https://village4a1000years.uk/>) The notebooks made by the Loders in the 17th century provide detailed information about farming practice in Harwell at the time.



Both Manor and advowson passed to the Raymonds in the 18th century and the Chetwodes in the 19th century. You will see a plaque, dated 1932, commemorating a Chetwode who paid for the repair of the chancel roof on the South (right hand) side of the chancel.

The stages of building the interior

The present building is an excellent example of the architecture of the Traditional Norman (from 1066), evolving into the Early English (late 12th century to mid 13th century), and the Decorated (up to the late 14th century). The order of building on the earlier chancel and aisleless nave seems to be

- 1190 – 1200 North and South transepts (see above – the arms of the cross-shape. You see the organ at the South end of this area).
- 1200 – 1220 The tower and the nave arcades (that is, the series of arches that separate the main body of the church, the nave, from the side aisles).
- 1270 – 1310 Extending the chancel (the far East end, where the altar is).
- 1275 – 1325 The South and North aisle walls and reconstruction of the porch.
- 1975 Ground floor and Upper room extension (home to the church office) on the North side.

The nave

In 1963 during restoration work, 21 burial vaults were uncovered under this floor. These brick vaults were built between 1770 and 1840 and the single brick arched roofs were found to be in a very unstable condition. They were filled in after research showed that the vaults were of no historical value. The general practice of burials inside a church ended in about 1840.

The nave arcades are unusually high and rest on four pillars with capitals, or adornments at the top, of foliage. You will find similar designs in the local churches of Ardington, East Hendred, Hagbourne, North Moreton and Steventon.

The roof is the original one built in 1202 and the trusses are numbered from 1 – 28, a rare and interesting feature. The six supports and braces below the main tie beams were placed at a later date. This might have been as late as 1867, when new seating was installed and various other repairs carried out.



Roof beams The trusses in the roof apex, show trusses number X to XIII, noting the detail of the scratched numbering (dm)



The traditional pews, which were Victorian and not of high quality wood, were removed in 2018 to make way for stackable chairs and carpeting, both of which allow for greater flexibility of use of the church building. In medieval times, there would have been no formal seating: the parishioners would walk around the church during the mass being celebrated at the altar; some would sit on stools or forms; others would kneel on the ground. They might come in late, or leave early, as agricultural routine dictated. Before the late 16th century, there were no bells to announce when services started nor was literacy so widespread that written notification would be helpful, so lateness did not necessarily mean carelessness!

The transepts

We know little of who was married in the church in the Middle Ages but one we do know of is John Atte Halle who completed the marriage ceremony with Margery de Bayllol (*see page 7 for information about her family*) in 1310. The celebrant was the Bishop of Winchester. Stand at this crossing (the 'arms' of the Cross-shape of the building, if it were seen from above) and take a moment to think of the thousands of couples who have since then made their vows in the same place ...

Turn right (to the South side) and you will see the organ dedicated in 1911 to replace a previous smaller one in the chancel. From behind here (step down to the nave and through a curtain, you can have a good view of the scissor brace roof of 1190 and small, widely splayed lancet windows. These are tall, narrow windows with pointed arches, typically seen in Gothic architecture (mid-12th to mid-16th centuries). They feature a wide splay, or gradual outward expansion, inside the wall where the window is set, compared to the narrower opening on the outside. This splay helps to maximize the amount of light coming through and can also be used to create a more visually striking feature in the building.



Above: scissor brace roof; below lancet windows (dm)



To find out more about the present-day life of our church, which we proudly refer to as 'the oldest community building in the village':
www.harwellandchiltonchurches.org.uk





The Wild Rose tapestry (see page 20), depicting scenes from agricultural life, including the cherries for which Harwell was renowned and the Harwell Feast, which is held to this day on the last Monday in May (dm).



The Gatekeeper tapestry depicting scenes from Harwell's history (dm)

They include the Great Fire of Harwell in 1852, which started on the High Street and destroyed nine farms and 23 cottages, and the sailing of colonists to Virginia in 1636
(see more on this on the Harewell window on page 20)

On the North side of the transept, the roof has been replaced with a later form of roof (compared to the scissor brace on the South side) about 1450. The corbels, or stone structures projecting to support a structure above it, that are here were originally decorative features on the outside wall of the north transept and were preserved when they were enclosed when the aisles were later built.



North transept interior from the aisle (ar-m)

There are lancet windows to see here also. The one on the East wall of this transept is a late 14th century replacement. The brass effigies on the North wall are a memorial to John and Margaret Jennens, their six sons and seven daughters. They were originally set into a grave slab in the centre of the floor of the nave and they date from 1599.

The chancel

Pass through the chancel screen and you will see that it consists of three parts. Above the base are slender shafts with rounded tops which suggests that this is one of the rare examples of a late 13th century screen. The upper tracery and the beam, which has been decorated to look like defensive work (from where it gets the name 'embattled' beam), is 15th century. The screen was refashioned at the Reformation. Above the screen, at the springing of the arch – that is, the point where the arch transitions from a vertical support to its curved shape – are two carved figures.



North transept exterior, showing the original height of the roof. In the foreground you see the chancel and priest's door (ar-m)

(You will see that the upper surface of both these figures are flat and were designed to support a rood beam. The word 'rood' is derived from the Anglo-Saxon 'rode' meaning 'cross'. The rood was an almost universal element in medieval parish churches.)

The figures of Christ on the cross, his mother and the evangelist John were on the rood as a symbolic representation of the sacrifice being recreated at the altar in the chancel. The rood was a place of reflection and worship, adorned with candles. One way that parishioners would support the church was by providing money, perhaps left in wills, for 'lights before the rood'. Although some survived, roods were widely destroyed in the middle years of the 16th century.

Many people were illiterate (or were unable to read Latin) but could gaze on the rood and be moved to prayer. The church also had wall paintings for people to look at to immerse themselves in the story of their salvation. In many churches the wall above the arch into the chancel was decorated with a Doom painting showing Hell.

Wall paintings were systematically whitewashed over in the Reformation when words were thought to be a better guide to faith than pictures but we know from an account of Rev Henry Chetwode in 1843 that there were still wall paintings of Biblical scenes in the St Matthew's chancel.

Look at the floor and you'll see a Purbeck marble slab over three metres in length and placed centrally on the floor with a large inlaid cross. It commemorates the Rector, Roger de Marlowe (*see page 7*), in whose time the chancel was completed **(ar-m)**



The brass candelabrum was previously at the East end of the nave. It was a gift from W. Christopher Elderfield in 1766.

The vertical stone structures which divide up the parts of the large East window, known as mullions, are unusual, in that on either side of the centre they are carried up to the head of the arch. The crest towards the top of the window is that of Piers Gaveston who was made Lord of the Upper Manor shortly after being made Earl of Cornwall in 1307 (*see page 7*).

It was recorded by Ashmole when he visited the church in 1665 that this window contained the coats of arms of the King, of the Prince of Wales and of Edmund, Earl of Cornwall. Ashmole also reported seeing the Jennens brass (*see earlier*) in its original location. The Prince of Wales in question was Edward II, born 1284 and created Prince of Wales in 1302. The King was Edward I. If you are familiar with Oxford you will know of the Ashmolean Museum – 'our' Ashmole, who visited, was one and the same as the benefactor of the Museum.

The upper parts of the two windows on the North side of the chancel (left, if you're looking at the altar) contain various fragments of medieval grisaille glass of exceptionally high quality collected from windows in various parts of the St Matthew's and reassembled by

a Mr. King of Norwich in 1959. Grisaille glass is a type of decorative stained glass characterised by its usually grey or black, ornamental designs painted onto clear or colourless glass. It was a cost-effective and artistic medium used in medieval stained-glass windows, often used alongside coloured glass to create intricate and visually striking designs. The chancel of 1305 presents a slightly later and more elegant form of crown post construction as each is octagonal with a moulded base and top part (the capital). Some of the timbers were replaced when the chancel was restored in 1932, when the wooden panelling was installed.



Chancel roof—crown post construction (dm)

The stone sculptures, known as corbels, are interesting. The one on the South side (on your right if you're looking at the altar) represents a dragon biting a lady while the one on the North side shows the curled figure of a man with his right hand held to his ear. On the North side is the figure of a man holding a leather bottle. Sculptured heads support the image brackets (decorative and often made of stone or wood to support a religious image, such as a statue or an altarpiece) on either side of the East window. Research done elsewhere in Oxfordshire suggests that such figures in churches, often grotesques and humorous, present an absurd opposite to the sacred liturgies taking place below to emphasise the power of the ritual and so enhance its effects. When they are on the outside of a building, they are apotropaic – that is to say, they guard the perimeter to ward off evil. (*You can see the corbels up close overleaf.*)



Corbels (ar-m)

The formal stone seats of the priest and deacon, the sedilia, always on the South side of an altar, are still there, as is the piscina, the space in which the ritual purification of the priest's hands was performed. One thing that confirms Harwell as a modest church is that the sedilia is a two-seater; churches with additional clergy would have had three. On the opposite side of the chancel is a door which gives onto the old churchyard and, ultimately, the grounds of the Rectory.



Left: the piscina (note the drain!) and right: the sedilia (er)

A remarkable survival in the church lies set into the floor behind the present altar in the chancel. It is now covered over by a carpet, and is the medieval altar stone. It is carved with five crosses that stand for the five wounds of Christ. There is a story to be uncovered here about how the parish dealt with the changes of the Reformation. In the statutes of Edward VI (reigned 1547 to 1553) there were clear instructions that the altar was to be replaced with a communion table, and earlier altar stones were to be destroyed. In this way our concealed altar stone was saved from destruction, even if it never again topped the altar.

The aisles

North aisle 1275 – 1325: windows and the Wild Rose tapestry

Walk back down the centre of the platform but stop before you get to the steps down into the main aisle. From here you will see the West window at the far end of the church. It dates from around 1280 and has a double lancet (that is, point) with diamond openings from which were developed geometric tracery with quatrefoils. Quatrefoils are like four-leaved clovers in appearance and are often seen in churches. They can represent the four Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) or the four limbs of the Cross.

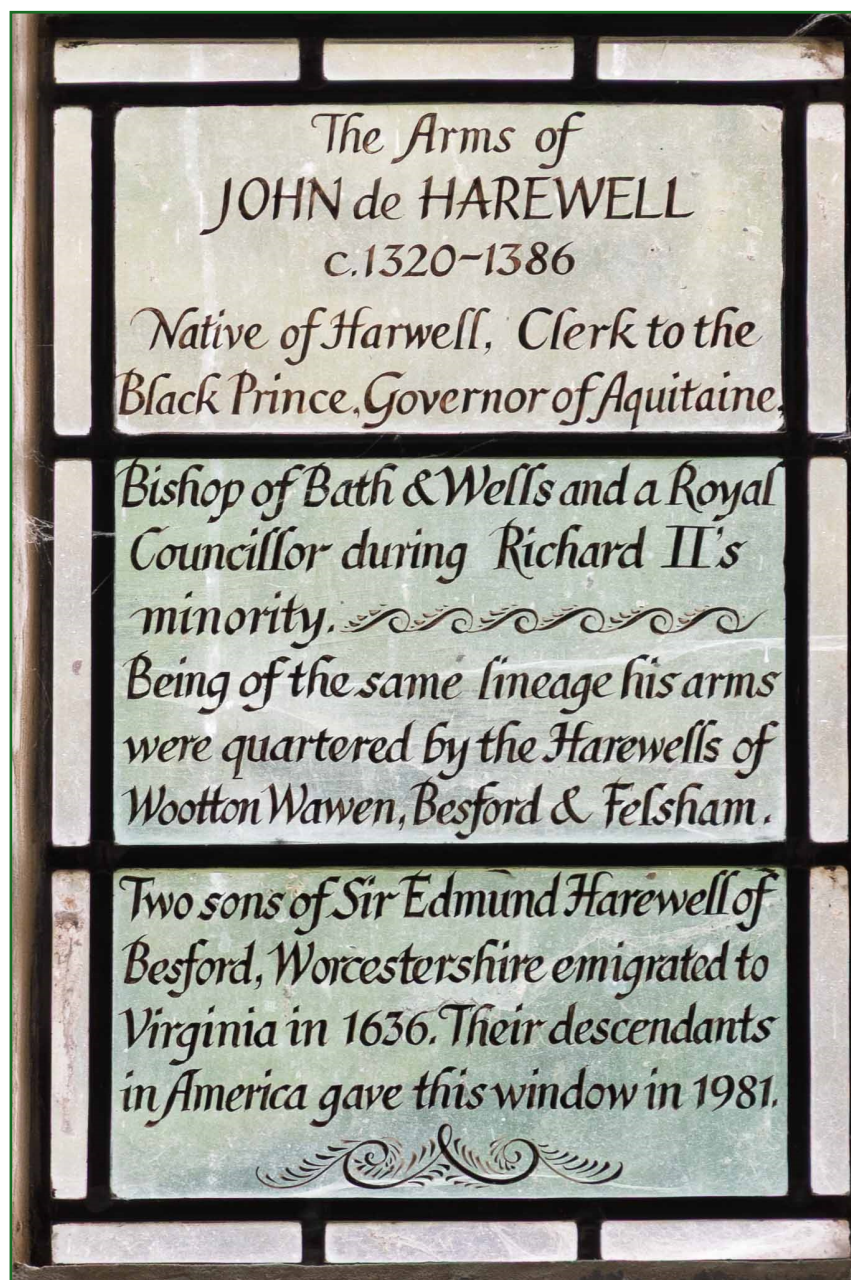
Now go down the steps and turn to your right (the North wall) and, standing in front of the window just before the arch into the transept, you see more advanced tracery (1300 – 1325) which used intersecting mullions (see earlier – the chancel) and ogee curves. These are decorative elements featuring a double curve (often described as an "S" shape) and were commonly used in medieval church architecture, particularly in the Decorated style of the 14th century.



The Friends of St Matthew's Harwell (QR links to the booklet '**A friendship which sustains**') regularly welcome American descendants to see the window. It's for this reason that we rejoice in active links across the Atlantic and warmly welcome more!



This window is now known as the Harewell Window since, in 1981, the collateral descendants of John de Harewell, 1320 – 1386, Bishop of Bath and Wells and counsellor to royalty, donated the cost of having the window restored , with additional stained glass. In 1636, Thomas Foulk Harewell and his brother sailed as colonists to Virginia, USA and over 500 of their descendants were eventually traced all over the USA by J M Fletcher and a committee. A large number came over for the dedication service on 20 September 1981.



Detail of the Harewell Window (jb)

Next to the Harewell window you will see the Wild Rose hanging tapestry (*pictured on page 12*), designed and worked by ladies from the village as part of the millennium celebration to commemorate 1000 years since the signing of the Royal Charter to the village of Harwell in 985. A pageant was performed on the former graveyard to the north of the church with audiences seated on the Rectory lawn. 250 members of the parish took part!

The South aisle 1275 – 1325: the Gatekeeper tapestry

Step over to the South aisle (the same side of the church as the main door through which you entered) and see the Gatekeeper hanging tapestry. The design around the edges (as with the edges of the Wild Rose tapestry now behind you) depict the fruit, wildlife and flowers found in and around the village. At the top are the hares from which some thought the name of the village to be derived. The crest standing at the top right-hand corner and moving clockwise are those of Piers Gaveston, the Black Prince, John de Harewell and the Loder family.

The tower

As you move to the base of the tower you can see the original medieval timbers supporting the ringing chamber floor. The West window, which has a double lancet (point), shows plate tracing which also occurs on each external face of the tower at its upper stages. Plate tracings were decorative shapes are cut through the solid masonry above a window.



Plate tracing in the West window (dm)

In the 18th century a 'West gallery' was built across the west end of the nave. These were common in the post-reformation period to provide extra seating and a place for musicians. West gallery music is still sung by some choirs. The gallery was lit by a dormer window that can be seen in a Victorian print of the church. The balcony had been removed in 1867; the remains of timbers were found when the extension was built in 1975.



Look above the door to the ringing chamber (on the right if you are looking at the West window) you will see a tile with initials inscribed on it. This is the oldest mark from the old roof. **(er)**

If you have the opportunity to go up to the bell chamber (by appointment) you will see eight ringing bells and a Sanctus bell.

You can see the rope for the Sanctus on the South side of the room at the foot of the tower. It's a bell that can be rung even by those who are not formally trained as bellringers and indicates that a Holy Communion is about to be celebrated. It is often known as a calling bell since it tells villagers that a service is about to start when a full ring of bells is not possible or inappropriate due to the hour.

The bells

We are immensely grateful to the Harwell Parish History Group who supplied the following information about the history of our bells.

St. Matthew's originally had a ring of six bells. It was thought they were also the earliest but research now suggests that two earlier rings, subsequently destroyed, existed in London at St. Michael's, Cornhill and St. Sepulchre's without-Newgate. (The latter's bells are the "Bells of Old Bailey" in the rhyme "Oranges and Lemons"). The ring has consisted of eight bells since 1932. Two new bells were added when the existing ring of six and the frame were restored. John Taylor and Joseph Carter of Whitechapel (London) and Reading (active 1578 – 1609) cast the bells currently named 4th and 7th in 1590 and 1597 respectively. He also cast bells for Lockinge and Sandford on Thames; Harwell's 7th is the third heaviest bell he cast. His son-in-law, William Yare of Reading (active 1609 – 1616), cast the current 3rd,

and 5th bells in 1611, the 6th and tenor bells in 1612. This tenor in E is the heaviest bell Yare ever cast, weighing 837 kg, (1, 846 lb, or .923 of a ton). Yare was Carter's son-in-law and succeeded him in running the foundry at Reading when Carter left to manage the Whitechapel (London) foundry.

Robert I. Wells of Aldbourne (active 1763- 1781) cast the Sanctus bell c. 1770. He also cast bells Sanctus for Fringford and West Hanney; Harwell's is the fourth lightest bell which he cast. You will see that the back six bells were cast between 1590 and 1615 and are among the oldest complete ringing six in the country.

A summary of the bells, their weight, tuning and manufacture

Bell	Note	Weight Hundredweight (cwt)	Weight Quarters (qtrs.)	Weight Pounds (lbs)	Founder	Date
Treble	E	4	1	24	J Taylor & Co	1932
2	D#	4	3	7	"	"
3	C#	5	3	11	W Yare	1611
4	B	6	3	2	J Carter	1590
5	A	8	0	14	W Yare	1611
6	G#	9	3	11	W Yare	1615
7	F#	13	1	27	J Carter	1597
8	E	16	1	26	W Yare	1612

The inscriptions are

Treble. * TAYLORS * FOUNDERS * LOUGHBOROUGH * 1932 / TO THE
GLORY OF GOD / THIS PEAL OF SIX BELLS / WAS COMPLETELY
RESTORED / & TWO NEW BELLS WERE ADDED / BY THE BELL TRUST /
IN 1932 // EMMA BARRON, FOUNDER OF THE BARRON BELL TRUST. / F.
HOPKINS, / P. M. WALROND, I H. W. ELDRED, / TRUSTEES. /
(T) Second * TAYLORS * FOUNDERS * LOUGHBOROUGH * 1932 /

(T) Third HVMFRIE LODER GAVE THIS BELL 1611 / WY
Fourth PRAISE ye the Lorde 1590/IC
Fifth THIS BELL WAS MADE 1611 / WY
Sixth THIS BELL WAS MADE 1612 / WY
Seventh THIS BELL WAS MADE IN THE YEARE OF OUR LORDE 1597 /
IC4
Tenor /THIS BELL WAS MADE 1612/ WY
Sanctus R.WELLS ABOURN ...



The fifth bell: W Yare 1611 (ds)

Outside the church

As you leave the church you will have noticed headstones forming boundary walls for the paths to the South door. The present village cemetery is along the pathway leading across the East end of the church bounded by Princes Manor Farm and the Rectory.

In 1930 the person who cut the grass in the church graveyard (with a scythe) complained of the dangers of the job because of all the fallen headstones. The pathways leading to and from the church were narrow and the earth on either side of them was crumbling, bringing with it some of the human remains buried there. The solution was to use the headstones to hold back the banked-up earth, restore the graves and protect the remains of those buried there. As years had passed since anyone had been buried in the graves – the churchyard was formally closed in 1903, the last burial being in 1896 – any first generation relatives had also died. Some 20 headstones were created out of concrete to fill in gaps sensitively. No headstone is buried any lower than its original depth.



View from the tower (ar-m)

The city of Oxford is visible from the top of Harwell church tower. We are told that, standing on this corner of the tower on 2 June 1953, Great Tom, the main bell of Christ Church, Oxford, and the mother church of the Diocese of Oxford to which St Matthew's Harwell belongs, was clearly audible to proclaim the crowning of Queen Elizabeth II. This was not the case in 2023 for the coronation of King Charles III - too much traffic and other ambient noise has intervened in 70 years.

Looking South from the top of the tower it's possible to see, in a private garden, the well from which the village name derives.

On the West face of the tower you will see the modern face of the clock given in commemoration of Pilot Officer Valentine Baker, RAF, killed in action in 1943. It replaced the clock given in 1703 by John Knapp of Harwell, of which the single-handed face can also be seen. The original mechanism of this clock was restored by apprentices at the then Atomic Energy Research Establishment (now Harwell International Business Centre).



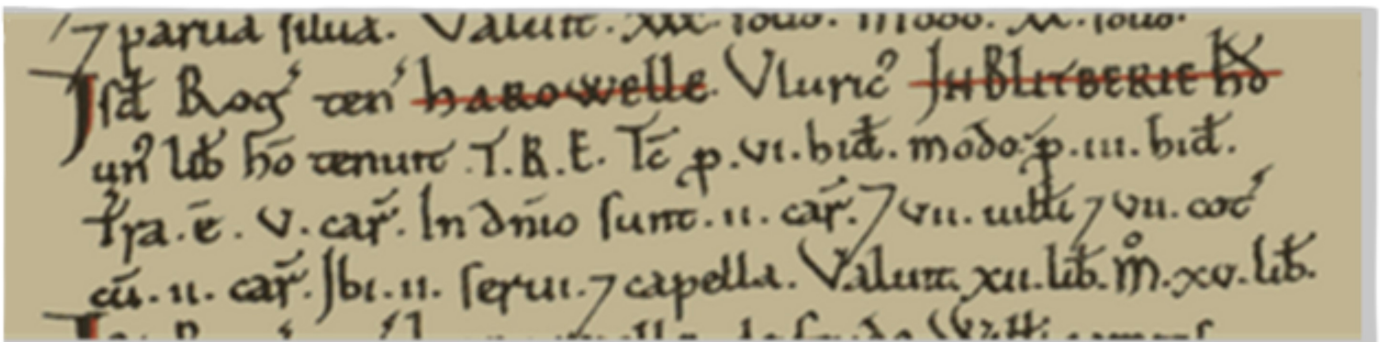
Photos: tower (jb) clock mechanism and inscription (er)

You will also see the trace of a West door, pictured overleaf. Research in the 1930s suggests that it was the door of a first-phase medieval or post-Saxon church possibly built in the 11th/12th centuries. Another theory is that it is the West door of the pre-Norman Conquest church referred to in the Domesday Book (*see next page*). The subsequent rendering of the church walls means it is no longer possible to see the structural details.

Standing a long way back from the church, possibly even in the road in front of it, you will also see five finial crosses on the roof ends. We believe that the originals were Victorian but three were broken during work on the roof in the 1970s. They were restored in 2023.



West door (ar-m)



In Blitberie (Blewbury) Hundred

The same Roger holds Harwell (from King William) .Ulric a freeman held it T.R.E.. It was then at 6 hides, now at 3 hides. There is land for 5 ploughs. On the demesne are 2 ploughs and there are 7 villeins and 7 cottars with 2 ploughs. There are 2 serfs and a chapel. It was formerly worth 12 pounds, now 15 pounds.

Source: The National Archives,
www.nationalarchives.gov.uk
 accessed by Jane Card

Glossary

Arcade	A series of arches that separate the main body of the church, the nave, from the side aisles.
Augustinian Order	An Order of monks, founded in 1244, who follow the Rule of St Augustine and take vows of poverty.
Capital	The wide part at the top of a column which is not only decorative but spreads the weight of the structure above bearing down on the column.
Chalice	A drinking cup, often raised on a stem with a foot, traditionally used in Christian religious ceremonies, particularly the Eucharist (Holy Communion), to hold wine. The item which holds the bread for Communion, and which often matches the chalice, is called the patten.
Chancel	The part of the church containing the altar.
Corbel	A projection jutting out from a wall to support a structure above it.
Dean	A senior Anglican clergyman or –woman.
Domesday Survey	Completed in 1086, the survey's main purpose was to record the annual value of every piece of landed property to its lord, and the resources in land, labour force, and livestock from which the value derived. The name "Domesday Book" came into use in the 12th century.
Finial	An ornament at the apex of a roof.
Grisaille	Grisaille glass in churches refers to stained glass windows that primarily use shades of grey, or other neutral tones, to create decorative patterns or images, often with a limited use of colour.
Lancet	A tall, narrow window with a pointed arch at the top, resembling the point of a lance (a long weapon with a pointed head often used by horseman warriors). They are a characteristic feature of Gothic architecture, particularly in the Early English Gothic style of the 13th century.
Mullion	A vertical structure that divides a window, door, or screen into multiple sections, often providing support for glazing.

Nave	The central part of a church building, intended to accommodate most of the congregation. The word traces back to the Latin word "navis," meaning "ship" because, being long and narrow,- it resembles the hull of a vessel that carries the faithful to salvation.
Norman Conquest	The invasion and occupation of England from 1066 by an army led by William, Duke of Normandy, also known as William the Conqueror. It began with William's victory at the Battle of Hastings on England's south coast, and continued with the suppression of revolts 1068-9, and the imposition of the feudal system.
Ogee	A double curve shape resembling an 's'.
Piscina	A shallow basin placed near the altar of a church, or in the vestry or sacristy, used for washing the communion vessels. Nowadays the vessels are washed in the kitchen!
Plate tracery	Dating from around 1220, this is the cutting of decorative shapes through the solid masonry above a window.
Quatrefoil	An ornamental design of four leaves with associated symbolism
Rector	In the Church of England, both rectors and vicars are typically parish priests. The title difference is now largely historical, related to how the parish was funded by tithes in the past.
Reformation	The religious revolution that took place in the Western Church in the 16th century. Martin Luther in Germany was arguably the biggest single trigger. It became the basis for the founding of Protestantism. The Church of England is a Protestant denomination.
Sedilia	A seat or set of seats, typically made of stone, located on the South side of the altar, usually in the chancel for the use of clergy. They are now just ornamental.
Tithe	One tenth of annual produce or earnings that used to be taken as a tax for the support of the church and clergy.
Transept	The part that extends outwards at a right angle to the main body of the church, the nave, creating a cross-shaped floor plan.
Vicar	See Rector, above.

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Kath Luker for information on the bells.

Our historians would be delighted to share their sources if you contact them through the church office, below.

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With its superb acoustic (and amplification/AV facilities if needed) as well as good car parking, St Matthew's is a popular venue for concerts and events. Should you be interested in hiring the church, please contact the Church Office (*details below*).

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Baptism registers for the years 1558 to 1952; Marriages 1558 to 1962, Burials 1558 to 1943 and Banns 1814 to 1945 can be viewed in the Church Office. Other years may be consulted by appointment at www.royalberkshirearchives.org.uk in Reading.

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