

# The lost churches of Northamptonshire

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## PREFACE

At the turn of the 16<sup>th</sup> century there were about 300 parish churches in Northamptonshire. During the late medieval period, churches were lost in villages that were abandoned, some became redundant due to changing demographics, and some fell victim to structural decay. Information on lost churches in the county from this time is dispersed across a range of sources and for that reason an attempt is made here to consolidate it into one list. The only previous long list appeared in the *Northampton County Magazine* of 1933 and all the churches mentioned in that article are included here.

This booklet begins with an example of the construction of an early church in the county before summarising the way that the Church was organized. Examples of bequests in aid of church upkeep are given followed by the reasons why some churches did not survive the centuries. Brief summaries of 47 lost churches that once stood in late medieval Northamptonshire are then provided. Churches that were taken down and rebuilt at some time and churches that have more recently become disused are for the most part not included. Religious houses suppressed in the 1530s including 26 abbeys and priories, 18 hospitals and six colleges are also excluded. Additional information on many of the churches listed can be found in the bibliography.

## BACKGROUND

It is hard to overstate the importance and influence of the church in medieval society. Everyone was expected to attend church services. Most if not all people were conditioned to believe in Heaven and Hell and that things happened through God's will. The parish church was a place where people were told of important things. Everyone was obliged to contribute to its upkeep, in good times and bad. Even the poorer peasants were obliged to hand over ten per cent of their income in money or produce to the Church through a system of tithe payments. The size and grandeur of churches, their architecture and the splendid tombs of the nobility emphasised power, status and wealth beyond the comprehension of the average peasant. Most have survived, but not all. Some have been lost to time.

### *The early church*

Before churches, stone crosses were used to mark the consecrated places in a landscape where sermons were preached. Fragments of Saxon crosses survive at several churches in the county including a cross head at Mears Ashby and carved cross shafts at Castor, Moulton and Nassington. Recent excavations at Raunds provide an example of the construction of an early church. A settlement was established there in the 6<sup>th</sup> century and was surrounded by ditches in the late 7<sup>th</sup> century. In the late 9<sup>th</sup> or early 10<sup>th</sup> century a small rectangular stone church 8.1m by 3.5m was erected outside the enclosure on the east side. It had a doorway in the south wall and at best it could hold about 20 adults which burial analysis shows was about half the population on the manor. Initially, however, there were no burials around it and the simple rectangular structure perhaps started life as a field chapel serving only the lord of the manor and people close to him.

The building was later enlarged with a chancel and possibly a bellcote against the west wall. Ditches were cut in the 10<sup>th</sup> century to mark-out a burial ground. These enlargements transformed the chapel into a small church with a cemetery for local people and may reflect the status and social aspirations of whoever held the manor at the time. Although it been enlarged, the small church was demolished and replaced by a larger building in the late 11<sup>th</sup> or early 12<sup>th</sup> century that was built over part of the burial ground surrounding the first church. Capacity in the second church increased to take up to about 100 people but it was not used for long as burials stopped shortly after it was built. By the late 12<sup>th</sup> or early 13<sup>th</sup> century the building was taken into manorial use and subsequently became incorporated into a manor house.

The parish church of St Peter's at Raunds (previously dedicated to St Mary) stands about 260 metres away from the site of the early churches and its relationship to them is not entirely clear. Although its structure largely dates from the 13<sup>th</sup> century it seems to have incorporated an earlier 12<sup>th</sup> century church and this suggests two possibilities. One, that because of changes in the way the manors were organized a new location for the church was needed and over time that became St Peter's. Alternatively, it is possible that there were always two churches, one for each manor, and for reasons unknown one became redundant and the surviving church evolved into St Peter's. Supporting this theory is that the total population of Raunds was greater than could have been accommodated by the burial ground of the excavated churches hence there must have been another one. While the earliest architectural evidence in many of the county's churches dates from the 12<sup>th</sup> or 13<sup>th</sup> century (see Appendix 1), in many cases there is evidence for an earlier structure on the same site. However, no evidence of a Saxon church in or around St Peter's has so far been found.

After the Conquest, many estates were given to new landowners and this process catalysed the building of new churches. Domesday Book sometimes reveals that a particular place had a church but the information on churches is patchy and varies from county to county. This arises because its main purpose was to record for each village how much land there was, how much it was worth, and who owned it. Churches were not a focus of the survey although the commissioners for some counties took more notice of them than others. Only four churches are mentioned in Northamptonshire, although many more villages had a priest, whereas 53 churches were recorded in Huntingdonshire. Although only four are recorded (Brackley, Pattishall and two unlocated), many more places described in the Northamptonshire survey (total 354) had a church or chapel at the time. The churches at Brixworth and Earls Barton, for example, both pre-date the Conquest but they are not mentioned in the survey.

The rare dedication of the church at Passenham to St Guthlac (677-714) suggests that a church existed there long before the present church which dates from the late 13<sup>th</sup> century was built. The placename Preston in Preston Deanery means priest's farm and suggests that a church was there. Finedon's status as a royal soke and its large population in the late 11<sup>th</sup> century strongly indicate the presence of a pre-Conquest church. A church at Wellingborough is said to have been granted to Crowland Abbey in the 10<sup>th</sup> century. Many other churches in the county contain architectural or sculptural details from the Saxon or early Norman period. At Oundle, for instance, the current church dates from the 12<sup>th</sup> century but part of a grave slab or coffin lid dating from the 11<sup>th</sup> century found under the current building suggests that it was built on an earlier burial ground. Given Oundle's status as an important centre in Saxon Northamptonshire there must have been a substantial church at that time.

#### *The parish and church organization*

Although the origins of the English parish are not fully understood they were certainly in place before the Conquest. In many cases there was a link to the boundaries of manorial estates at the heart of which was a village. On small estates the population was insufficient to maintain both church and priest so there may have been a chapel served by a priest from a church or a nearby abbey or priory. In villages with larger populations a church and priest could be supported by income from glebe land, tithes, offerings and payments for services. This was a bit of a balancing act, however, as the population had to be big enough to maintain the parish church and at the same time small enough to fit inside it. As estates changed hands and the population grew, churches were enlarged and new ones built often on the same site as a previous building. By the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century the parish system extended across much of England and in many rural settings the parish boundaries have changed little since. Towns fared differently and new parishes were created to cater for expanding populations particularly in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. For a long time, the parish was the basic unit of administration with the various parish officials such as the churchwardens, the overseers, and the constables dealing with the poor, the sick, maintaining the roads, and public order.

For a time, it was fashionable for wealthy people to fund the building of a church as a way of signalling their status and wealth. This goes some way to explaining why, at least in many rural parishes, the manor house and church were close to each other. Medieval Northampton at one time had nine churches of which four are still standing (All Saints, Holy Sepulchre, St Giles and St Peter's). Simon de St. Liz, Earl of

Northampton, founded the priory of St Andrew in Northampton around 1093 and gave all the churches in the town to the priory. The earl joined the First Crusade and it is thought that on his return and in gratitude for the success of the expedition he founded the round church at Northampton modelled on the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem.

The Diocese of Lincoln which controlled churches in Northamptonshire was created in the 11<sup>th</sup> century. Before that, Northamptonshire had been included in a diocese run from Dorchester-upon-Thames in Oxfordshire and before that it was in a diocese based in Leicester. The county stayed with Lincoln until after the Dissolution when the Diocese of Peterborough was created in 1541 and has remained with Peterborough ever since. A list of vicarages in the Diocese of Lincoln compiled around 1220 shows 53 in the county of which six, Guilsborough, Marston, Maxey, Moulton, Newbottle and Wellingborough, were described as having been ordained 'very long ago'. Little Addington was included in the list but the architecture in the current church dates from 1280-1300. The list confirms that there was already a church in the village at least 60 years previously and this may explain why the current church was built on a north-south slope when a short distance away there is level ground. Social and religious ties to the hallowed site of an earlier and presumably much smaller church seem a compelling explanation.

Although deaneries were established at an earlier date, ten deaneries were recorded in a document of 1291 covering 250 parishes. They were Brackley 40 parishes, Daventry 18, Haddon 36, Higham 23, Northampton 6, Oundle 27, Peterborough 14, Preston 25, Rothwell 40, and Weldon 21. Another five parishes are known to have existed in Northampton at the time but seem to have been overlooked and the same can be said for several rural parishes. By the early 16<sup>th</sup> century there were 105 vicarages and 176 rectories in the county. Some villages had two churches. Aldwinckle, for instance, had All Saints and St Peter's and the two parishes were united in 1879. Irthlingborough also had both All Saints and St Peter's but no trace of All Saints remains.

## CHURCH UPKEEP

Maintaining churches in good condition has always been a challenge. Although we know very little about churches in Northamptonshire from the Domesday survey, information on other counties shows that some were in a dilapidated condition in 1086. The Wiltshire survey, for instance, mentions a church with no roof that was about to collapse and another that was in ruins.

Some of the uses to which churches were put did nothing to keep them in good condition and various orders were issued over time to prevent their misuse. Aggrieved that a fair was sometimes held in the church and churchyard of All Saints in Northampton the bishop persuaded Henry III to order that the fair be moved from the church to nearby waste ground which became the market square. The bishop followed this up with orders that churches must not be defaced, that they should not be used as places for buying and selling or for playing games. Sometime between 1200 and 1210, the parishioners of Maxey petitioned the Abbot of Peterborough to stop the churchyard being used as a road for carts and animals and the churchyard was subsequently enclosed.

Given their long history and the inevitable need for building alterations most old churches contain architecture spanning several centuries. Maintaining churches in good order required regular donations and to help with their upkeep people often gave money, jewels, gold, silver, livestock and other goods. Sometimes people funded the rebuilding of a new church such as at Whiston where a new church was built in 1534 at the expense of Anthony and Isabelle Catesby. John Bridges, whose history of Northamptonshire was compiled in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, records that the church at Preston Deanery was in ruins by 1600 with the lead and bells sold and some of the walls pulled down. It was extensively rebuilt in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century by Charles Edmonds after the death of his father who had purchased the manor.

### *Bequests*

The earliest surviving wills proved in Northamptonshire date mostly from around 1500 and it was common practice at the time for testators to bequeath money or goods to a church. People gave to the upkeep of their parish church, the poor in the parish and sometimes other churches as well. Wills sometimes tell us when substantial repairs or other building work were taking place and some examples of bequests are given below.

The church at Easton Neston was substantially rebuilt in 1436 according to the will of John Bacoun. In 1471, John Hynde willed that his great plate of iron be sold at the best price and that the money should go towards to the upkeep of the church at Titchmarsh. John Denham left 40 shillings to the repair of the steeple at Barnack in 1526. A chapel of Our Lady was built in Bugbrooke church in 1530 as William Ashby bequeathed a strike of barley (two bushels) towards it. Routine repairs are more widely mentioned. William Bukland of Wellingborough, for instance, gave 10s-4d to repair the flooring in the chapel of St Mary and in 1530 Robert Harryet gave such money as was needed to glass the middle window on the south side of the church. Most wills of the early 16<sup>th</sup> century included a small bequest to the high altar, typically a few shillings, for 'tithes negligently forgotten'. People did this as they did not want anyone to think that they died with debts owing to the church.

Bells needed repairing and in 1532 Richard Harris gave 6s-8d towards a new bell at Harlestone saying that that the money was to remain with his executors until the whole parish had raised enough money to buy it. If the new bell was not purchased within four years of his death then the money was to be put towards the repair of ornaments in the church. Richard Bunche gave ten shillings towards a new bell at Naseby in 1529 and John Hoges gave four pence to the repair of the great bell at Oundle in 1539.

Early wills often include donations to the rood screen, holy rood or rood loft. The rood screen is a partition, often wooden and beautifully carved and decorated, situated between the main part of the church (the nave) and the chancel containing the altar. The rood, a large figure of Christ crucified, is positioned above the rood screen. In 1498, William Bawston gave five sheep to the rood at Bulwick. Roger Ashburne of Higham Ferrers in 1529 gave his house, the tools of his trade and four shillings to the rood chapel. The rood loft, a space above the rood screen, was a frequent benefactor. Henry Cave, for instance, gave £6-13s-4d to the repair of the rood loft at Cold Ashby in 1507.

Church plate of gold and silver including crosses, dishes, containers for wine and water, candlesticks and basins was a regular focus. Nicholas Woodhull of Warkworth gave his broken silver and gold to make a larger chalice for the church in 1531. He also gave a gown of black satin and his wife's clothing to be made into vestments and ornaments. In 1533 Richard Rateclyff gave four shillings to the church at Lamport to help buy a candlestick and Robert Yorke gave a hundred sets of willows in 1528.

Money or goods were also bequeathed for the purchase of or making of vestments including altar cloths, sheets, surplices, towels and banners. In 1498, William Bawston bequeathed to Bulwick church a coverlet of red and yellow to be born before the cross on Palm Sunday and to lie before the high altar on every main feast day. Sir John Spencer gave a generous gift to Brington church of a whole suit of vestments and a chalice worth four pounds. In 1537, Catherine Hensman gave a tablecloth to Ecton church so that an altar cloth could be made from it.

Bibles, mass books, books of music, hymn books and books containing special services also featured in wills. Thomas Chaswell of Kislingbury gave 20 shillings to buy two antiphoners (music books). At Naseby, Henry Belhost gave 20 shillings to buy a book containing the musical sections of the mass (a grayle) in 1523 and Alice Belhost gave 26s-8d to buy a grayle in 1529.

Large candles called torches used in funeral services were often mentioned in wills. Richard Langley of Finedon gave seven shillings in 1510 'towards the making of the torches' and in 1531 John Olyver gave four groats to the torches at Islip. Richard Langley also gave a bushel of malt to the light of Our Lady, two bushels to the rood light, and one bushel each to the Gilds of Our Lady, the Gild of St John, and the Sepulchre Gild at Finedon. Gilds were widespread in medieval England and had religious, social and economic functions. They owned property, attracted the wealthier residents, employed priests to say mass and conduct other services, and helped the poor. One unusual bequest relating to a gild was by Agnes Dobs of Oundle in 1514 who willed that she and her two late husbands should be made sister and brothers of the Gild of Our Lady after her death. This was probably so that the members of the Gild would continue to pray for them.

#### *Deterioration*

Bequests such as those above along with other sources of income were used to help maintain churches in good order. These assets, however, eventually became a liability. After the surrender of abbeys and priories in the 1530s, the Crown's attention turned to churches and to the valuable goods that they contained. Around 1550, most parish churches were stripped of valuables such as silver plate, chalices, ornaments and paintings. At Werrington, for example, the churchwardens listed a silver chalice with a patten, a pax, vestments of silk, 'darnax' and worsted, nine altar cloths and nine towels, two small candlesticks sold for ten pence, a pair of censers also sold for ten pence, a chest, a surplice and rochet, a latten cross, two hand bells and another bell sold for 4s-8d, a case with a cloth of blue worsted, two steeple bells and a Sanctus bell. Stone altars were removed and often destroyed. Murals were destroyed or whitewashed. Stained glass was often destroyed or removed. Even tombs were destroyed to get at the brass upon them. This pattern of destruction continued under Elizabeth I such that during her reign many churches fell into a dilapidated state, open to the weather and to birds. Another wave of 'purification' happened in the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century when many remaining images, crucifixes, altars, monuments, glass and pictures were destroyed under Puritan rule.



Surveys taken in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century of churches in the Diocese of Peterborough show that many were in a bad state. At Irthlingborough St Peter's the lead roof was leaking, the vestry was 'decayed and ruined', the floor was uneven and broken, monuments were defaced, and the churchyard was 'profaned with dung and rubbish and other noisome filth'. At Little Addington the church had holes in the floor deep enough to bury a child in and the chancel was full of starlings, owls and jackdaws. In 1570, Rothwell church had broken windows, the church was like a dovecot and the churchyard walls were falling. In 1573 the chancel was in ruin. In 1631 a window in the chancel was daubed up five or six feet high. The spire and part of the tower fell in 1657. Church linen also came in for criticism in the survey, for example at Finedon where it was said to be more suitable for a poor woman's apron than 'an ornament in God's house.' Luckily, however, despite episodes of State-sponsored looting and destruction the basic fabric of most churches survived. Indeed, in a lot of places the church is the only surviving structure from the medieval era.

### REASONS FOR DESTRUCTION

There are several reasons why some of the county's medieval churches have disappeared. Some became unsafe and had to be taken down. The 13<sup>th</sup> century church at Stoke Doyle was said to be 'so ruinous that to repair it would be a burden too heavy for the parish to bear', that it was too big for the village and the spire was in danger of falling. It was taken down in 1722 and rebuilt over the next few years on the same spot. The 14<sup>th</sup> century church at Wollaston collapsed in 1735 and was rebuilt in 1737.

Northamptonshire contains around a hundred deserted villages, depending on definitions, and some had a church. The land once occupied by the village was often taken into pasture for grazing and buildings were removed. In some cases the church disappeared along with the village although in other cases the church survived, for example at Church Charwelton. Sometimes a village migrated a short distance from its original location and the old church fell into disuse. Examples include Boughton near Northampton where the ruins of the medieval church of St John remain at Boughton Green and unusually the churchyard continued to be used as a burial ground. Some villages were cleared to make way for a mansion house and gardens built for a dominant landowner. Grounds were usually landscaped and anything that spoiled the view was removed. The village and church at Lilford were completely removed in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century for this reason.

In a few cases, two nearby parishes would, perhaps because of a shrinking population, consolidate such that one church became redundant. This happened at Wicken (formerly Wick Hamon and Wick Dive) in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Similarly, some villages had two churches and over time one became surplus to requirements as happened at Barnwell in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In large towns the growing population and changes to highways and street plans also marked the end of some churches particularly if they were already struggling.

Other reasons for destruction outside the county include bombing in the Second World War for example London, Coventry and Bristol; falling into the sea such as at Dunwich on the Suffolk coast where several churches were lost in the 14<sup>th</sup> century due to coastal erosion; and the relatively recent creation of reservoirs such as at Normanton in Rutland and Mardale in the Lake District.

## SCOPE AND COVERAGE

The religious houses, colleges and hospitals that surrendered during the Dissolution of the Monasteries in the late 1530s are not included as they are dealt with comprehensively in the *Victoria History of the Counties of England, A History of Northamptonshire*, volume 2, which is available online. Examples include the Abbey of St James at Northampton, the College of Higham Ferrers, and the hospital at Armston. Many had their own church or chapel although some used a parish church. The College of Irthlingborough used St Peter's, for example.

Many chapels existed particularly in smaller settlements but they are not usually included as little is known about them, although see Appendix 2. In Bridges' time, for instance, there was a tradition that a chapel at Boughton near Weekley was cleared when Boughton House was built. A chapel at Knuston in the parish of Irchester was in decay by 1567. However, it is sometimes unclear whether a place mentioned in historical sources was a church or a chapel and some chapels are included here.

Churches that were taken down and rebuilt often in the 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> centuries such as Clopton in 1862 are not included. Redundant churches many of which have medieval origins such as St Peter's in Northampton are also excluded as they still stand and details of them are easily found. It is also worth bearing in mind that many of the ancient parish churches in the county have looked quite different at some time in the past. Fotheringhay church, for example, was substantially altered in the 16<sup>th</sup> century when the choir was demolished after the Dissolution.

## LOST CHURCHES

Listed below are the churches that are known to have stood in Northamptonshire but which, in most cases, have completely disappeared. A few speculative cases such as Althorp are also included. The list may not be exhaustive.

### *Althorp*

Althorp was mentioned in 1086 and up to 100 people lived there in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. The village was cleared by the 16<sup>th</sup> century to make way for sheep pasturing. There is no record of a church or chapel at Althorp but during alterations to Althorp House in 1958 fragments of medieval stonework were found that are consistent with coming from a church. If it was a chapel it may have been served by a chaplain from a neighbouring village or by a priest from St James' Abbey at Northampton as the abbey held land and buildings there. The village was probably located at SP 678648.

### *Barford*

Barford is a deserted village near Rothwell. Only a single lodge remained in 1720 although the marks of houses in the old village were still visible on the ground. It had a church and since there are no appointments to it in the Lincoln registers it was probably served by a priest from nearby Pipewell Abbey. In 1526, John Bull of Great Oakley gave a pound of wax to Barford church for four years after his death. Richard Bawe, priest of Glendon, via his will of 1531 gave 20 pence to the church of 'Saynte Martyns in Barford'. Bridges recorded that the church which was 'situate on an eminence, declining northwards to the river Ise' was complete in 1625 but was decaying in 1655. Around 1720 he wrote, 'It is now destroyed, the walls and

churchyard intirely levelled, and laid open to the rest of the home ground, or hall-ground, where the hall-house anciently stood.' Bridges also remarked that people could remember burials there, 'and bodies have been found within few years past', so the churchyard may have continued in use as a burial ground after the church had decayed. The village was located around SP 853828.

#### *Barnwell*

Barnwell was once a village of two settlements each with its own church. The parish of Barnwell All Saints in Huxloe hundred was united with the parish of Barnwell St Andrew in Polebrook hundred in 1821. Hundreds were ancient administrative divisions of the county dating back to pre-Conquest times. All Saints which dated from the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries was demolished in 1825 although the chancel remained as it was the resting place of the Earls of Sandwich among others. The oak pulpit and other furniture dating from the 16<sup>th</sup> century are said to have been transferred to the church at Thurning. Monumental inscriptions were recorded by Bridges who also gives the layout and dimensions of the lost church.

#### *Blatherwycke*

Medieval Blatherwycke had two parishes and two churches either side of the Willow Brook. The parish on the west side, St Mary Magdalene was united with the parish on the east side, Holy Trinity, in 1448. The last rector of St Mary Magdalene was appointed in 1437 and the dedication, perhaps to a chapel in Holy Trinity or for services in a ruined church, appears in the will of Thomas Nicholls in 1533 who bequeathed to 'the chapel of Mary Magdalen to pray for my soule.' Holy Trinity church dates from the 11<sup>th</sup> century and is now part of the Churches Conservation Trust.

#### *Boughton Green*

An important trade fair was held on the now triangular green at Boughton near Northampton from around 1350 onwards on the vigil of the nativity of St John the Baptist. The original church near the green was built in the late Saxon period and was rebuilt in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. In 1637 the chancel was decayed and holes in the walls allowed rabbits to run in and out. The north aisle had collapsed into a heap of stones. John Bridges noted that the church dedicated to St John the Baptist, 'stands upon the green about half a mile distant from the town. It now lyes in ruins, no part of the roof remaining and the walls in several places levelled with the ground.' A drawing made in 1721 shows the tower, spire and body of the church. The spire collapsed in 1780 and the site is unusual in that substantial remains of the building still stand and the churchyard is still in use. Unusually perhaps, because the village migrated some distance away from the original church a chapel was built in the early 15<sup>th</sup> century which became the parish church of today. This chapel may have even earlier origins as the use of a chapel in the new village suggests that the old church had ceased to be a place of worship for most parishioners by around 1500. SP 764656.

#### *Brime*

Brime, near Culworth, is mentioned in Domesday Book as a small place with six villagers, five slaves and a priest. The presence of a priest suggests that there was a church but Brime is not mentioned again after 1086. Brime is thus another deserted village the exact location of which along with its church remains unknown. However, it may have simply been absorbed by the expansion of Culworth such that the placename fell out of use.

### *Burghley*

A chapel is recorded at Burghley near Stamford in 1289 but the village seems to have always been small and the site was deserted by 1450. No trace of the medieval settlement remains and the most likely explanation is that the village and its chapel were levelled to make way for a substantial Tudor residence and the later building of Burghley House on the same spot.

### *Catesby*

Catesby was divided into Upper and Lower Catesby. In the late 14<sup>th</sup> century, the population of both villages was quite large going by the number of taxpayers but both villages were later deserted. In John Bridges' time in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, Lower Catesby contained the ruins of a convent and Upper Catesby had about 25 inhabitants. The convent was at one time endowed with the church at Catesby among other things. When threatened with dissolution, a letter was sent to Thomas Cromwell saying that the prioress was wise and discrete and that she supervised nine nuns as religiously and devoutly as could be. Despite the glowing reference the priory was not spared and it was sold in 1536/7. Among its possessions were 788 acres of pasture, 83 acres of meadow, 160 acres of arable together with the priory itself, the church and churchyard, bells, two water mills, eight houses and a cottage. Bridges recorded that when the monastery was destroyed the church dedicated to St Mary situated in Upper Catesby was partly demolished.

It may have dated from 1229 when the king allowed the prioress to take timber from the forest at Silverstone to use in building a church. In 1384, W. Smyth of Catesby gave the church 20 shillings and stipulated that his executors saw that it was put to good use. John Clerk gave 6s-8d in 1398. A survey of churches in the Diocese of Peterborough in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century found that the priory church of Catesby was derelict in 1631. Apart from the steeple and bells and a few yards of wall it had been demolished or had collapsed. In Bridges' time, part of the tower with buttresses and foundation walls remained and a sketch of the ruins made in 1721 is included in Bridges' *History* along with some monumental inscriptions. The churchyard was evidently used for some time given and some memorials dating from the 18<sup>th</sup> century are still visible. Located around SP 526594.

### *Churchfield*

Churchfield is a deserted village lying west of Oundle towards Benefield. It is first mentioned in an Anglo-Saxon charter of 964 and its name suggests that a chapel or a church already existed there by then. Not much is known about the village but it seems that it was always a small place and tax returns suggest a population around 40 people in 1301. A chapel was mentioned in 1189 and the modern Chapel Close may be where it was located. A fragment of a medieval window built into Churchfield farmhouse may have come from the church. Little trace of the village remains. Near TL 005877.

### *Elkington*

Elkington near Yelvertoft is mentioned in 1086 and may have had a population at that time around 75. The village and most of the parish was given to Pipewell Abbey near Rothwell in the middle of the 12<sup>th</sup> century. A newly ordained priest was appointed in 1349 which suggests that the previous incumbent had died as a result of the plague. It had a sizeable population in the late 14<sup>th</sup> century but by 1412 it appears to have been virtually deserted because of pestilence. The last appointment of clergy to serve at the church made by the abbot and convent of Pipewell was in 1407 which fits with the

time that it was depopulated. Pipewell Abbey was itself struggling in the early 15<sup>th</sup> century and the Pope reaffirmed the church at Elkington to the abbey although whether that did any good seems questionable. Bridges' *History* says of 'Elkington', 'Of the church which formerly stood here there are now no remains, nor any tradition at what time it was destroyed.' The location of the church is unknown but would have been near SP 626762.

#### *Faxton*

Faxton near Lamport is an unusual case of a village that took a very long time to be completely depopulated and it was not completely abandoned until the 1960s. The church dedicated to St Denis was officially a chapel of ease served by the church at Lamport at least from 1208. A dispute, however, arose in 1180 between the Priory of Lewes and the rector of Lamport concerning the burial of parishioners which may suggest that it had always been served by Lamport. The church was described by Bridges who also recorded several monumental inscriptions to the Nicholls family. It was in a bad state in the early to mid-20<sup>th</sup> century but campaigns to fund its restoration were not successful. It was last used for worship in 1939 and was eventually taken down in 1958/9. The medieval font was removed to All Saints, Kettering. Wall monuments were removed to the stables at Lamport rectory and some years later they were removed to the Victoria and Albert Museum as part of its collection of English sculpture. SP 784750.

#### *Glendon*

Glendon is a deserted village that was located on the site of Glendon Hall near Rothwell. Richard Bawe, priest, through his will of 1531 wished, 'To be beryed in the quire of ye cherche of Saynt Elyn in Clendon before ye image of ye sayd Saynt Elyn' and gave 6s-8d to pay for a tabernacle to Saint Elyn. The church dedicated to St Helen was visited in 1635 by the Archbishop of Canterbury who recorded that it is 'utterly decayed and one Mr Gage hath promised to bring me true information against one Mr Lane, the lord of the manor and author of this ruin.' The church never recovered and was probably taken down around 1758 when Glendon Hall was landscaped. Despite the best efforts of a *Time Team* dig in 2006, the exact location of the church could not be found but there is some structural evidence that it occupied the site of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Coach House Barns. Part of the cemetery was found, however. Luckily, drawings of the paintings in the windows of the church relating to David and Abigail dated 1563 and drawings of some unidentified figures were made before the church was taken down. SP 84578135.

#### *Grafton Regis*

Lying about 650 metres west of the present church at Grafton, excavation revealed a set of buildings from the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries one of which may have been a small church. It has been identified as a small priory known to have existed at Grafton and supported by the Woodville family whose shield was found in floor tiles in the presumed church. The site seems to have converted to domestic use in the 15<sup>th</sup> century and sometime later the site was abandoned as there is no sign of occupation in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. SP 752467.

#### *Hartwell*

The modern village of Hartwell is some distance away from the original medieval village and the present church was built in 1851. A chapel dedicated to St John the Baptist stood in the centre of the medieval village that was abandoned and resettled about a mile to the north. The chapel continued to be used even though only Chapel

Farm remained on the site. The chapel was given to the convent of St James near Northampton in medieval times and was probably served by a chaplain from St James. By 1535, however, Hartwell had its own minister but in 1641 it was recorded that 'Master Gittins that doth serve the Cure is so very poore and miserable that no marvell there is no preaching; he hath beene there some thirty or forty years'. It had all the rights of a church except burial such that the village had to bury at Roade. In Bridges' time there were no monumental inscriptions. Baker, who includes a sketch of the chapel, describes it as 'a small Norman edifice with later alterations and mutilations.' The foundations of the chapel date from the late 12<sup>th</sup> century and Domesday Book mentions a priest there in 1086. Located around SP 784489.

### *Hale*

Hale was a very small village south of Apethorpe that has the unusual distinction of being the only Northamptonshire village that, according to documentary evidence at the time, was depopulated as a direct consequence of the plague in the middle of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. This does not necessarily mean that everyone there died of the plague as they might have simply moved away in search of a better living. Ten tenants held land there according to an inquiry taken in 1272. A church or chapel dedicated to St Nicholas was recorded at Hale around 1250 but its valuation was very small. Despite the depopulation from the plague in 1348, clergy continued to be appointed to the church and Bridges found that the last appointment was John Knyvet in 1389. After that the appointments stop and there is no further mention of it in the Lincoln registers. The houses were still standing in 1381 but had fallen into ruin and were described as 'wasted'. Some repopulation may have occurred but not for long. The village was located at TL 015943.

### *Halse*

Halse is another village mentioned in 1086 that in the 14<sup>th</sup> century was quite large. By the early 18<sup>th</sup> century it was a hamlet of just a few houses. Early wills contain bequests to Our Lady Chapel in the churchyard and to 'the reparacon of our Lady's chapell' in 1537. A church, and possibly a later chapel, dedicated to St Andrew is traditionally said to have been close to Manor Farm. A history of Brackley published in 1869 records that in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century some features of a church or chapel were found in the walls of the farmhouse and in 1843, three arches were exposed during building repairs although these were destroyed. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, skeletons were found northwest of Manor Farm and may indicate the former churchyard. New housing development occupies the site of the lost village of Halse.

### *Irthlingborough*

Irthlingborough once had two parishes, All Saints and St Peter's. The church of All Saints was located about a quarter of a mile east of St Peter's and was probably always the smaller of the two. First mentioned in 1214, excavation in 1965 revealed a chancel, nave and apse indicative of a mid-12<sup>th</sup> century date. Burials were found near the outside walls and under the floors. About 400 skeletons were removed. It was situated adjacent to a manor house that may have been the dwelling place of John Pyel who was born in Irthlingborough and who was at one time Mayor of London. Documents show that Pyel announced his various purchases of land and property in the church. When making his will in 1379, Pyel gave bequests to the repair of the two churches, the highways and to Irthlingborough bridge. He also gave to All Saints various vestments, missals (books containing the text for the celebration of mass) and a strong chest to keep them in. After it was damaged by fire, All Saints was modified in the 14<sup>th</sup> century when the chancel was lengthened and when aisles and a west tower were

added. These enlargements presumably catered for an expanding population but only eight parishioners were recorded in 1428.

Various bequests to All Saints appear in wills around the start of the 16<sup>th</sup> century including Agnes Barwicke who in 1526 gave a flaxen sheet to cover the rood in Bedlem chapel. The right of presentation to the rectory was granted to the dean and chapter of Peterborough in 1541 but by 1562 the church was said to be in a complete state of ruin. Dilapidated churches were easy prey for landowners and the lead, worth ten pounds at the time, was taken from the roof and used in the construction of Burghley House. A visitation of 1570 found that the church was in decay and the churchwardens were ordered to set about repairs but the challenge appears to have been too great. The congregation moved a little way up the road to St Peter's but a gravestone found on the site bearing the date 1670 suggests that the churchyard may have continued in use long after the church ceased to be a place of worship. In his description of Irthlingborough, John Bridges remarked that, 'Here were formerly two churches, one dedicated to All Saints, which hath long been destroyed.' It had been pulled down by the early 1700s when parts of it were incorporated into a house. Church and manorial complex located around SP 95107070, church excavation at SP 951703.

### *Kirby*

Kirby near Gretton occurs in the Domesday survey as Chercheberie and later as Chirchebi. The placename has Scandinavian origins and means settlement with a church. It looks likely therefore that the village was created during a period of Viking settlement when Christianity had been accepted in the region. Part of Kirby was granted to Fineshade Abbey in 1297 which may indicate that a chapel at least was maintained there. By the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century the village had been depopulated to make way for Kirby Hall and its gardens. However, maps made at the same time show a church and about twelve houses so they must have been pulled down afterwards and certainly by 1685 when the great gardens were laid out. Writing in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, John Bridges describes how beautiful the gardens were but he made no mention of a church. He did record however that, 'Where the mount now is, a cart load of bones was dug up about twenty years since.' Assuming that they were human bones then the mount may have been the site of a burial ground and perhaps a graveyard attached to a church. The church was southwest of the Hall at or around SP92489237. Another deserted village, Kirby near Blakesley, has different origins to Kirby near Gretton and its placename does not derive from being a settlement with a church.

### *Lilford*

Forty households were recorded at Lilford in 1086 which allowing for families suggests that it was relatively large. The first record of a vicar is in 1228 but a church had probably existed there long before. In 1310, an indulgence (remission of punishment for sins) was granted to people who visited the altar of St Mary and who gave money or goods to support the maintenance of the church and the income of the chaplain who served the altar. In 1658 the living received an augmentation (the income to the vicar was increased) and this may have happened because the income to the church was being appropriated by a dominant local landowner. The village was cleared in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries to make way for the Hall and the remaining church structure was demolished in 1778. Unusually, three arches from the church dedicated to St Peter and St Paul were removed to an area called The Lynch in between Achurch and Lilford and erected close to the river Nene. In the clearance of Lilford, villagers were removed to the hamlet of Wigsthorpe where a chapel served by the

vicar of Lilford had existed since 1347. This chapel had gone by the early 18<sup>th</sup> century. Luckily the parish register of Lilford which runs from 1560 to 1778 survived the destruction of the church which was located at or near TL 030839.

#### *Maidwell*

John Bridges records that there were once two churches in Maidwell, one dedicated to the Blessed Virgin and one to St Peter. He remarked that St Peter's church was 'long since destroyed, and of which no remains are left.' Nothing about this church seems to have survived but the site was northeast of the other church in a place called St Peter's Close. W. Bolton gave a sheep to Our Lady in Maidwell St Peter's in 1521.

#### *Newton*

At one time there were two villages near Geddington called Little Newton and Great Newton and each village had a chapel. The will of Sir Edward Mulsoo of 1458 refers to the churches of 'Mochel Newton and Litill Newton in the shire of Northampton'. A declining population left Little Newton with only four parishioners and being only a few hundred yards apart the two chapels were united in 1450. The chapel at Great Newton dedicated to St Leonard had decayed by the early 1500s and was abandoned although the vestments, books and other items were removed to the chapel at Little Newton which became the parish church dedicated to St Faith. Little Newton then went into decline and the village, probably already deserted, was most likely taken down to build a new mansion house around 1600. Bridges recorded several monumental inscriptions and noted that, 'In the church-yard are some remains of an ancient cross, and many fragments of antique grave-stones, with imperfect inscriptions almost effaced with age.' Excavation of the St Leonard's site at Manor Farm revealed a 12<sup>th</sup> century structure that had been strengthened in the 14<sup>th</sup> century along with burials close to the wall footings. A high proportion of burials were of children. SP 886835.

#### *Nobold*

This deserted village with a name meaning 'new build' was west of Clipston and is not mentioned until the late 13<sup>th</sup> century. It was completely abandoned by the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century if not long before as John Bridges writing around 1720 tells us of a site called 'Old Nobold' where there 'stood anciently a town and church'. Bridges mentions that in the earthworks of Old Nobold there was a piece of ground called the churchyard, 'and a large old tree growing in it, lately cut down, always called the churchyard tree. Human skulls and bones have been dug up here.' He also states that part of the manor house in Nobold was by tradition built out of the ruins of Old Nobold church noting that some parts of the building were better than the rest and that they resembled materials from smaller and plainer churches.

#### *Northampton*

Seven churches once stood within the medieval walls of Northampton; All Saints, St Giles, St Gregory, St Mary, St Michael, St Peter and the Holy Sepulchre. The Priory of St Andrew was founded about 1093 and was granted all the churches in the town by its founder Simon de St Liz. Also in the town were St Edmund's without (ie., outside) the east gate, St Bartholomew's without the north gate, and St Katherine's which was a chapel of ease to All Saints. Seven out of nine incumbents died from the plague when it struck the town in 1349. Of all the ancient churches, only All Saints, St Giles, St Peter's and Holy Sepulchre remain although St Peter's is now redundant. The medieval church of All Saints was mostly destroyed when much of the town was devastated by fire in 1675 but was rebuilt on the same spot.



An inquiry of 1428 rated the values of each church in the town as follows. St Peter's 30 marks, All Saints 20 marks, St Giles seven marks and St Sepulchre's four marks (a mark was two-thirds of a pound). The other churches that later went out of use had lower values; St Gregory's 46 shillings, St Mary's 40 shillings, St Michael's 40 shillings and St Edmunds 20 shillings. Although conjectural, the ancient parish boundaries of St Peter's, St Gregory's and St Mary's appear to have respected the location of a high status Saxon hall the site of which was later included in St Peter's parish. A possible route into the Saxon town may have followed the line of Tanner Street, then diverted around the site of the hall, before realigning on the north-south route on Quart Pot Lane. This suggests that these three churches, at least, date back to the middle Saxon period. After the Reformation, St Bartholomew's and St Michael's were absorbed by Holy Sepulchre, St Edmunds was absorbed by St Giles and All Saints absorbed St Mary's by the castle and St Gregory's.

#### St Bartholomew

St Bartholomew's church was originally bestowed by Simon de St Liz and given to the priory of St Andrew. The north gate, which it lay beyond, was situated on the road to Kingsthorpe where Grafton Street and the Upper Mounts meet the bottom of Barrack Road. The church was on the east side of Barrack Road on the north side of Leicester Street (at SP 75406145). Thomas Robyns was instituted to St Bartholomew's in 1461 and held it until he died in 1475. John Wederhurd, a merchant, in his will of 1490 left 40 shillings to the repair of the road leading to the chapel of St Bartholomew the apostle. This seems to be the only mention of the church in surviving Northampton wills at a time when bequests to churches and chapels were commonplace. Its lack of mention in local wills suggests that the church had already decayed by the late 15<sup>th</sup> century.

When he visited Northampton around 1538, John Leland wrote, 'I saw the ruines of a large chapelle withowte the North gate' and this must have been St Bartholomew's. A close matching the location is shown on the Marcus Pierce map of Northampton of 1632 and 'St Lawrence church yard' appears on an enclosure map of 1778. Bridges in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century could not discover when the church was taken down but tells us that the churchyard had at one time been converted into a close called Lawless churchyard the name supposedly being a corruption of St Laurence by which name it was once known. The use of 'St Laurence' came into use long after St Bartholomew's was abandoned and the reasons for the name change are unclear. A possibility is that the name Lawless derived from the church at one time being a place where marriages took place with no questions asked, but that is speculation. The parish was united with the church of the Holy Sepulchre.

#### St Edmund

St Edmund's outside the east gate was in the parish of St Giles. The east gate was situated where the top of York Road meets the bottom of Lower Mounts and was described by Leland around 1540 'as the fairest [gate] of them alle'. The church was situated at Abington Square between the roads leading to Kettering and Wellingborough, near where there is now a garden of remembrance. St Edmund's End is shown on a map of 1610 lying just beyond the east gate around the site of the Bradlaugh statue. Gubbin's or Gobion's farm was in the parish and the site was at one time an orchard. The will of John Wederhurd, merchant, gave 6s-8d to St Edmund's in 1490. Dame Elizabeth Saxby gave to the torches in 1503. Town records show that in

1549 five loads of stone were removed from the steeple of St Edmund's to repair the west bridge and the town walls.

An enquiry of 1598 asked when St Edmund's church had been abandoned. The vicar of Pitsford aged 43 said that he did not know when it had decayed but said that the vicars of St Giles had the rights to the fruits of St Edmund's. Another witness aged 67 thought that St Edmund's had been decayed for about 60 years which fits well with the removal of stone in 1549/50. Bridges recorded that around 1535 the rectory was annexed to the rectory of St Michael and in his time the site and churchyard were a cherry orchard. It was located at or near SP 76106084 and skeletons were disturbed when the Abington Square café was built around 1900. A church also dedicated to St Edmund was built nearby in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and should not be confused with the medieval church.

#### St Gregory

St Gregory's was established by the end of the 11<sup>th</sup> century and excavations suggest that it was on the site of a middle Saxon cemetery and possibly a Saxon church. It was situated east of St Peter's near what are now Free School Street and Gregory Street. For some time it attracted attention because of a celebrated stone crucifix (the Holy Rood in the Wall) to which people gave donations often via bequests in their wills. James Holcroft, for instance, gave a silver cross to the holy rood in 1514. The last known appointment of a rector was Henry Breton in 1532. The Gild of the Holy Rood along with others came to an end after the Dissolution and the Rood was probably destroyed. The loss of income that accompanied the destruction would have been catastrophic for the church and eight years later it was in such decay that its bells and lead from the roof were sold. In 1556, the remaining lead was purchased from the town and carted off. Following a petition stating that divine services had ceased and that repairs were no longer viable, in 1577 the site and buildings were handed over and used to build a grammar school. The vicarage was used as the master's house. The town was required to maintain the school and provide the salary for a priest to assist the vicar of All Saints to which the old parish was annexed. The school buildings were taken down in 1840 when various parts of the old church including Norman architecture were discovered. Located at SP 75106035.

#### St John's chapel

St John's chapel was the chapel of the hospital of St John the Baptist in Bridge Street. William Berwynt of Northampton, mercer, desired through his will of 1463 that he should be buried in the church of the hospital of St John. John Bridges described the hospital as consisting of a chapel, a hall with lodgings for the poor and two rooms for the two co-brothers who were in Holy Orders. The master had a good house and garden.

#### St Katherine's chapel

St Katherine's chapel stood west of All Saints on the north side of what is now St Katherine's Street. When John Lelend visited Northampton around 1538 he recorded that, 'There is a chapelle of St Caterine sette in a cemiterie in the toune belonging to the chirch of Al-Halowes, where that parochie dooth byri.' William Hawredd's will of 1526 desired that he be buried in the churchyard of 'St Katherines in the parish of All Hallows.' The town paid for repairs to the windows and roof in 1587 but it may have already ceased to be a place of worship by then. Plague victims were buried there and the lands on which it stood were leased in 1602 along with the right to remove stone and timber. In 1610 an order was made to wall-up the churchyard at the Horsemarket

end and a gate was added to the end abutting College Lane. The town approved the building of a small house in the churchyard in 1612 and in 1631 it was agreed that stone should be taken from the walls of the chapel and used to repair the Town Hall as needed. Stones from the site were also used to repair the town walls in 1641.

All Saints had for long been the principal church in the town, perhaps because of its central location, and by 1633 the state of its churchyard was causing concern. A doctor in the town recorded that graves were dug 'for new guests before the old inhabitants be quite metamorphosed into their mother mold'. The churchyard was so full that digging a fresh grave without disturbing the recently interred was near impossible. Consequently, the costs of burial were doubled but burials at St Katherine's cost only six pence or 12 pence if the deceased was a stranger. The churchyard of St Katherine's belonged to the vicar of All Saints in 1669 and gave an annual rental income of £1-15s. In Bridges' time the site was a cherry orchard and no longer used for burials. The churchyard provided an income of ten pounds to All Saints in 1823. Located at SP 75246052.

#### St Margaret

John Wederhurd, merchant, gave 6s-8d to St Margaret's without the west gate in his will of 1490. Various other bequests to St Margaret the Virgin appear in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century. Thomas Osborne in 1529 gave 26s-8d to the Black Friars to pray for his soul 'in the church of Sent Margaret in Sent James End without the walls of Northampton'. Bridges found no records of clergy appointed to St Margaret's or to St Katherine's chapel.

#### St Martin

St Martin's church or chapel appears in the registers of St James abbey in St Martin's Street. It was probably located in Horsemarket and was the original site of Cluniac monks in the town before the formation of St Andrew's Priory. It was recorded as lying waste for over 20 years in 1274 but a vicar was presented to St Martin's in 1372. It is not mentioned in the wills of local people which suggests that it had gone out of use by the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century if not long before. Located at or near SP 75156055,

#### St Mary

St Mary's, sometimes known as St Mary's by the Castle, dated from the 11<sup>th</sup> century and the vicarage was ordained in 1221. It was used for official purposes when the king's court met at Northampton. Through his will of 1490, John Wederhurd gave the church 6s-8d and the church benefitted from bequests in many Northampton wills in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century. By the late 16<sup>th</sup> century, the church, in St Mary's Street, was not financially viable. The buildings were dilapidated and the small number of parishioners could easily attend divine service at All Saints with which it was eventually united in 1589. William Woodward was appointed there in 1535 and no subsequent incumbent is known. The church was probably taken down in the 16<sup>th</sup> or 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. The churchyard belonged to the vicar of All Saints and gave an annual income of £1-10s in 1669 and £3-3s in 1823. The vicar of All Saints took St Mary's churchyard as a burying ground in 1757. Its location was at or near the junction of Castle Street and Chalk Lane, SP 74996061.

#### St Michael

St Michael's was a parish church present in the late 12<sup>th</sup> century. A charter of 1329 mentions a tenement in the possession of Henry de Isham, burgess, 'in the lane going from Abington Street towards the church of St Michael and [which] abuts on the

gateway of the Carmelite Friars'. The will of John Clerke, baker, of 1500 mentions his two cottages 'in White Freres Lane against the parish church of Saynt Michell in the town of Northampton'. Roger Gold gave 20 shillings towards the building of the steeple in 1513. Bridges recorded that the parish had been united with St Sepulchre's and gives Thomas Parnell as the last incumbent instituted in 1493. It was variously described as being in White Friars Lane, St Michael's Lane, Cock Lane and ultimately, Wood Street. Cock Lane was an old street running north from the top of Fish Street, formerly Fish Lane, that joined Lady's Lane. It was so-called after the Cock Inn which stood at the bottom of the lane on Abington Street. Located at or near SP 75606075.

#### St Thomas's chapel

St Thomas's chapel existed by 1200. It is mentioned in the will of John Carter in 1527 who gave 6s-8d to 'Stonton the hermyt of Saynt Thomas chapell'. John Lawnden in 1509 gave two strikes of barley to 'Seynt Thomas chapel in Coton'. As hermits often dwelt in places near bridges the chapel may have been close to the south bridge. Speed's map of 1610 shows a hermitage on the south side of the castle.

In addition, there were several churches belonging to the religious houses in Northampton. The church of the Priory of St Andrew, according to a map of 1632, stood northwest of the junction of Priory Street and Harding Terrace and the burial ground was on the east side of Francis Street. The church of the White Friars stood on Kerr Street which was around the top of Wood Street. The Hospital of St Thomas was set-up in the 15<sup>th</sup> century although it is possible that the 15<sup>th</sup> century endowment was the continuation of a chapel dedicated to St Thomas Becket granted to the Priory of St Andrew in the early 13<sup>th</sup> century. The 13<sup>th</sup> century chapel of St Thomas may have stood on the south bridge. The Chapel of St George was the main chapel in Northampton castle.

The Hospital of St John Baptist and St John Evangelist was probably formed around 1140. In the early 14<sup>th</sup> century its church had four altars and thus seems to have been of some size, perhaps reflecting large numbers of poor that were attending and its cemetery was enlarged in 1286. Recent excavations support the idea that the chapel was part of a larger church that once occupied the site. The ancient buildings at the bottom of Bridge Street have been converted and now contain a restaurant.

The Augustinian Abbey of St James was dissolved in 1538. Excavation in 2001 showed that the abbey church, located at Express Lifts, was 76 by 19 metres. The churchyard initially contained ordered rows of burials probably of high-status people but later burials in simpler graves disturbed the earlier interments. Analysis of the bones suggests that many of the burials were of people who had died in the abbey's infirmary such that the cemetery was not used exclusively for the monks who lived there.

#### *Overstone*

The modern village of Overstone lies a little distant from the medieval settlement. Although it was once quite large, the village except for the church and the manor house next to it were removed and rebuilt to the north. This probably happened by 1737 and certainly by 1775. The old church dedicated to St Nicholas for which the first known incumbent was instituted in 1222 was taken down in 1803 and a new church was built north of the original site. In describing the consecration of the new church in 1807 the *Northampton Mercury* says that the ancient fabric of the old church had for

some time been in a ruinous state. All traces of the old church were removed in the interests of landscaping around Overstone Hall although some monuments were transferred to the new church. Baker, writing in the early 19th century, remarked, 'The old church, now literally levelled to the ground, and its very site blended with the verdant lawn, stood in front of the manor-house.' The will of John Geffron dated 1486 bequeathed 6s-8d for tithes forgotten and 20 pence each to the altars of the Blessed Mary, St Anne, St Thomas and St John the Baptist. Located around SP 806656.

#### *Peterborough St John*

The original parish church dedicated to St John that stood east of the cathedral was taken down and rebuilt closer to it. Bridges recorded that, 'The old parish church stood eastward of the Minster, at the end of the town, near a lake, in the close called St John's close.' Bridges also tells us that in 1401, the parishioners had complained that in the winter they could not get to the church because of high water levels and flooding and prayed that it would be pulled down and rebuilt in the marketplace. This was confirmed in 1402 when it was agreed that the beams, rafters and other materials 'should be removed to the middle of the market place of the said town and a new church built at the sole expense of the parishioners.' The new church was completed in 1407. The minister of the new church benefitted from 23 acres of arable land, a monk's corrody (a pension) and the donations given to St Botolph's chapel. The site of this chapel which existed before 1200 is unknown.

#### *Pipewell*

An abbey for Cistercian monks was founded at Pipewell in 1143 and was well-endowed with land, woods, granges and income from various rectories. Despite its resources, ongoing poor management of the estate particularly of woodland started a decline in fortune. A rebuilt church of the Blessed Mary was dedicated in 1311 before a large gathering of worthies. The 14<sup>th</sup> century, however, saw continued financial problems for the abbey. A petition to the Pope in 1412 claimed that the abbey's buildings were in a ruinous state and that many houses had been abandoned because the land had become barren. Despite the decline in fortunes which continued into the 15<sup>th</sup> century, sincere representations were made on behalf of the abbey during the Dissolution emphasising its continued hospitality to visitors and its good work for the poor. As with all other religious houses, such representations were in vain and Pipewell abbey was surrendered in 1538 including the contents of the church and its several chapels. Seeing such a great resource of building materials abandoned, local people took advantage by removing doors, lead, iron, glass and flooring from various buildings. In the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, John Bridges recorded that, 'Not far from the present woods are the vestiges of old buildings. On the south side where the church is supposed to have stood, are the ruins called the Hall-hallow. Within these few years, large pillars, wrought and glazed pavement, with great quantities of painted glass, and a mutilated figure of the Virgin Mary have been found near the ruins.' Located at SP 84058567.

#### *Rushton St Peter*

The two villages of Rushton All Saints and Rushton St Peters were close to each other and both had a church. Agnes Sawyer gave eight pence to the sepulchre lights in her will of 1499, Thomas Bassett gave two sheep to the image of Our Lady in the church in 1502, and Alys Sprott gave 3s-4d to the steeple of 'Seyntt Peter in Rushton' in 1515. The village of Rushton St Peter's was gradually depopulated to make way for the construction of Rushton Hall. Part of the churchyard was acquired in 1737 and used to enhance the mansion grounds. When the two parishes united in 1780, St Peter's was

taken down and some of its ancient monuments were removed to nearby All Saints. The church was located on the left of the main entrance to the Hall and the site is now under grass and the road. SP 83705 82735.

#### *Shutlanger*

John Bridges said of Shutlanger, 'Here is still in being an old chapel, fifty-one foot in length, and now converted into a farm house.' Some features date from the 14<sup>th</sup> century. The building has been substantially altered but the porch and outer walls were very much indicative of a church that was presumably taken down before the early 16<sup>th</sup> century when the building was converted. There is some doubt that the building was ever used as a church or chapel but it certainly had the characteristics of one.

#### *Sibberton*

Sibberton near Thornhaugh is another deserted village that is first mentioned in 1189. It was probably always small although a taxation of 1301 suggests a total population around 80. A church is mentioned in documents in the 14<sup>th</sup> century but the last presentation there was in 1389. After that date there is no further mention of the church in historical records. Some building materials from the church were reused in Sibberton Lodge and there is a tradition that the font was relocated to the church at Wansford. Several stone coffins were discovered near Sibberton Lodge which may mark the site of the church. The village of Sibberton was located at TL 064998.

#### *Stamford Baron*

Although adjacent to Stamford in Lincolnshire, Stamford Baron was always outside the old town walls and lay south of the river Welland in historic Northamptonshire. The church of All Saints stood on Water Street which runs alongside the river. It was certainly in existence by 1189 and may have been there for several decades before that. The Bishop of Lincoln approved the unification of the parishes of All Saints and St Martin's in Stamford Baron in 1434. The church, which was perhaps already in a run-down state, may have been destroyed after Stamford was occupied by a Lancastrian army who objected to the town's allegiance to Yorkists. Other than roughly where it was, little is known about it. The parish of Stamford Baron also included the Hospital of St Giles, the Hospital of St John and St Thomas the Martyr, the house of St Sepulchre and the chapel of St Mary Magdalene.

#### *Steane*

Steane is a deserted village near Farthinghoe but was once an independent parish. In 1377, 51 people paid the Poll Tax so it was a sizeable village at that time. Appointments to the church date from 1248 through to 1566 and it is possible a chapel built in 1620 near the manor house was built on the site of an earlier church as it contains what appears to be a medieval window. SP 55453 39020.

#### *Stuchbury*

Stuchbury is a deserted medieval village and independent parish that was northeast of Greatworth. The village is listed in Domesday Book and is thought to have been cleared around 1377 to make way for sheep pasture. It is not known when the church dedicated to St John was abandoned and later demolished nor is its exact location known. By tradition it was located in a field called Weston's Piece but aerial photographs show crop marks in another area indicating a large enclosure containing a structure that was aligned east-west and this looks suspiciously like a church. The

site of the village is a scheduled ancient monument and no excavations have yet taken place. Village located at SP 569440.

### *Sulby*

An abbey at Sulby was founded in 1155 and lasted until it was suppressed in 1538. The medieval village of Sulby near Welford was abandoned and deserted sometime in the late 14<sup>th</sup> or early 15<sup>th</sup> century. The village had a church dedicated to St Botolph that was separate to the abbey church and little is known about it. Sometime during the reign of Henry III, the church and the manor of Sulby were bestowed on the abbey. In 1451 the rector, John Clere, writing to the mother church at Lincoln said that the nave had fallen long before, that there was no hope of rebuilding it and that he had no parishioners. Despite the state of the church the bishops continued to appoint clergy to it, the last in 1525, until what was left of it was pulled down after the abbey surrendered its possessions. Bridges tells us that it was situated about a mile north of the abbey in or near a meadow called St Botolph's Pool. The exact site is unknown but earthworks show that it may have been on a prominent platform near the centre of the old village that has an east-west alignment. A skull and other human remains found in a large badger sett in 2006 that most likely date from 1150-1220 may indicate the site of the cemetery. If so, then the Hall, now demolished, was built on site of the church and cemetery. SP 65978167.

### *Sulgrave*

The church of St James at Sulgrave dates from the late 13<sup>th</sup> century. However, Bridges recorded that, 'In the midway between Culworth and this town is about an acre of ground, fenced in with an hedge, called *Old Church-yard*, where the church is supposed to have stood. Stones and bones are often dug up here, and it is preserved as consecrated ground, though never used, unless privately by Roman Catholics.' The present church contains a re-used Anglo-Saxon doorway which may date from the 10<sup>th</sup> century and which presumably came from the first church. A substantial Saxon hall was excavated at Sulgrave and is consistent with an early church near the site. The first recorded appointment at Sulgrave was in 1222.

### *Thrupp*

Thrupp was mentioned in the Domesday survey and the chapel of St John the Baptist served by the church at Norton was instituted in 1257. The chapel, 54 feet long and 21 feet wide, was in ruin by the 1530s and an inventory of its contents was taken at the time. They were; a table of the high altar, an image of St John, an image of Our Lady, other images, a mass book, a portuus (hourly services said by the clergy), a pax (a tablet of ivory or wood overlaid with gold or silver), a small Sanctus bell, a desk, an iron to put candles on, a rood loft with images of St John, a small bell, an alambaster (possibly a white stone or image made from white stone), an image of 'Mare a pyte' (Our Lady of Pity), candlesticks of wood, desks, and seats in the church. The village was cleared for pasture around the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century and a house was built on the site. SP 598650.

### *Walton*

This small village lying southeast of Kings Sutton was cleared in the 16<sup>th</sup> century to make way for sheep farming. On his travels throughout England around 1540, John Leland noted, 'I rode from Brakeley to Kyngs Southtown 4 miles of, al by champayn corne and gresse. The spire of Sowthetowne churche is a fayre peace of worke. St Rumoalde was borne in this parochie. There was of late a chapel dedicate to hym, standing about a mile from Southetowne in the medes, defaced and taken down.' It

was presumably located in Chapel field which was so-called by the early 18<sup>th</sup> century and may have been the site where St Rumbold was supposedly born in 662. Rumbold, it was said, confessed his Christian faith moments after being born, called for his baptism and died a few days later. Dedications to St Rumbold are uncommon but the church at Stoke Doyle is an exception. SP 506346.

#### *Wick Hamon*

The modern village of Wicken once consisted of two parishes, Wick Hamon and Wick Dive, each with its own church. A chaplain was presented to the church at Wick Hamon in 1218 but after 1278 the incumbents were rectors. Thomas Jebbes gave two new torches worth 6s-8d in 1507 and Edward Giffen gave two brass handbells in 1555. In 1587 the Bishop of Peterborough was petitioned since the living at Wick Hamon had become vacant following the death of the incumbent and because all the parishioners of both villages could fit into either church. As such, the two parishes were united the same year when the church of St James at Wick Hamon was abandoned and the bells removed. It is possible that services had been coming to an end in Wick Hamon since a memorandum in the parish register which began in 1559 might suggest that services were being conducted only at St John the Evangelist in Wick Dive. Alternatively, it could mean that they were still being conducted at both churches but that they were all being recorded in Wick Dive's register. The church at Wick Hamon was pulled down in 1619. Nothing remained in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century although Bridges recorded that part of the tower was standing not many years previously. A *Time Team* dig in 2006 found the exact location of St James in a field called Old Church Yard where tradition had placed it. The original layout of the church appears to have been quite basic. Located at SP 74073931.

#### *Wothorpe*

Between Easton on the Hill and Stamford at Great Wothorpe there was a poor Benedictine nunnery that benefitted from the rectory of the parish church at Wothorpe. The nunnery, and possibly the church, were in poor condition in 1292 when the bishop granted indulgences to penitents who contributed towards building repairs. The plague brought about the death or removal of all the nuns except one and in an effort to keep them viable in 1354 the nunnery and the church were attached to St Michael's in Stamford. A chaplain was appointed to serve the church at Wothorpe and look after the parishioners. The church was in use in 1513 when Robert Smyth desired through his will to be buried in the aisle in the 'chirch at Worthorp in ye ale as ny Seynt George as may be.' The manor and rectory were taken by the Crown during the Dissolution and granted to the Cecil family and building materials such as stone and lead were removed to furnish Burghley House in 1555. Peck's *Annals of Stamford* published in 1727 recorded that nothing of the monastery or church was still standing although the site was well known. Peck also noted that there were many traditions regarding the beauty of the church. The priory and church were close to each other but no trace of either now remains. Located at TF 02500 05300.



## Appendix 1. Architectural dating

As noted above, only four churches were recorded in the Domesday survey of Northamptonshire but there were many more as at least 67 priests are recorded excluding those in places that are now in Rutland. Bearing in mind that churches were built and altered over centuries but often retain earlier features, the table below shows the dates of the earliest architecture up to the 16<sup>th</sup> century found in churches in the county. In many cases, the amount of fabric that survives from the earliest date is small, perhaps a doorway, a window or a font. Churches that were taken down and rebuilt and for which there is no dating evidence of the earlier structure are excluded. At Overstone, for example, while a church is known from the 13<sup>th</sup> century nothing that could date the fabric of the destroyed church has survived.

Of 280 medieval churches for which data were obtained, almost half (45.4%) contain architecture from the 12<sup>th</sup> century and 30.7% date from the 13<sup>th</sup> century. However, in many cases there is evidence of a church before the earliest datable architecture. The fabric of the church at Hardwick dates from the early 13<sup>th</sup> century but the advowson (the right to appoint clergy to a church) can be traced to the early 12<sup>th</sup> century. Other indications of an earlier church are the presence of a priest in 1086, that the location was the centre of an important Saxon estate, and possession of a manor by an abbey or priory.

Century	Earliest fabric, %
Pre-11 <sup>th</sup>	1.0
11 <sup>th</sup>	7.5
12 <sup>th</sup>	45.4
13 <sup>th</sup>	30.7
14 <sup>th</sup>	13.6
15 <sup>th</sup>	1.8

Sources used: *History of the county of Northampton* volumes 1-5; Pevsner's (1973) *Buildings of England, Northamptonshire*; [www.crsbi.ac.uk](http://www.crsbi.ac.uk).

The locations of priests in 1086 were taken from the text of the Northamptonshire Domesday contained in the *History of the county of Northampton* volume 1. Many villages around Peterborough, however, were not included in the survey. Furthermore, a priest called Godwin held land at several places and it is unclear whether this was one priest or several priests called Godwin. For these purposes they are taken as different people. See also [opendomesday.org](http://opendomesday.org).

## Appendix 2. Supplementary list of lost chapels and churches

The information below is taken from the *Northampton County Magazine* of 1933 (see Bibliography) with additions.

### Ascote

A chapel existed in the manor house in the time of Henry VIII.

### Armston

A hospital and a chapel with a burial ground were built at this deserted village near Polebrook about 1232.

### Blakesley

There was once a chapel at Little Blakesley.

### Brampton Ash

A chapel was taken down about 1710 and the materials used to build a house in Market Harborough.

### Braunston

A church dating from about 1250 was taken down in 1848 and rebuilt on the same site.

### Chapel Brampton

No trace of the chapel of St Margaret which gave the village its name now remains.

### Clay Coton

The 14<sup>th</sup> century church is now a private house.

### Clopton

The ancient church was taken down and rebuilt in 1864. A chapel in the churchyard is also lost.

### Croughton

The chapel has disappeared.

### Daventry

The present church was built on the old site in 1752/3.

### Denton

There was formerly a chapel in the southwest of the village.

### Downton

The deserted village of Downton near Stanford once had a chapel of ease.

### Eaglethorpe near Warmington

A chapel was erected in 1443.

### East Carlton

The present church was erected in 1788.

### Elmingham near Oundle

No trace remains of a former chapel of ease.

#### Evenley

The present church was built in 1864. The previous church was present by 1147 and probably somewhat earlier.

#### Eye

The present church was built on the site of the former church in 1846.

#### Falcutt

A chapel in this deserted village in the parish of Wappenham was present by 1536 but had gone by 1655. Thomas Lovett of Astwell gave 6s-8d to repairs in 1491.

#### Fineshade

A seventeenth century chapel has disappeared.

#### Fotheringhay

Two chapels were in the castle.

#### Foxley

Foxley is a deserted village near Blakesley. There is no evidence of a church there but there was a Foxley (Foxle) hundred at the time of Domesday which may suggest that the village had been important enough to give its name to the hundred. If it had been an important centre in the 10<sup>th</sup> or 11<sup>th</sup> century it may have had a church.

#### Furtho

The present church was erected in 1620. The first recorded appointment to the previous was in 1226.

#### Great Oxendon

A chapel was in the village as the church was some distance from the houses.

#### Hanging Houghton

A chapel of Our Lady instituted around 1228 attracted numerous bequests to maintain it in the late 15<sup>th</sup> and early 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. Stone from the ruins of the chapel were used to build a manor house.

#### Harrington

A chapel was built in the time of Henry VIII.

#### Harringworth

According to Bridges, a ruined chapel stood east of the church in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century. In 1515, W. Brown gave four pence to the bridge between the church and the chapel. Bridges also mentions a chapel or hermitage that stood south of the church.

#### Harrowden, Little

John Thorpe gave eight pence towards the building of a hermitage chapel in 1517 and several bequests to Sir Thomas the hermit in St Andrew's chapel occur in later wills.

#### Heathencote

No trace of the chapel of the Blessed Virgin remains.

#### Kingsthorpe

Kingsthorpe near Polebrook is a deserted village that had a chapel by 1398.

#### Knuston

A chapel of St Leonard was in decay in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

#### Little Bowden

A chapel was built in 1398.

#### Little Oxendon

A chapel at this deserted village was licensed in 1398.

#### Longthorpe

Bridges recorded that there was anciently a chapel at Longthorpe dedicated to St Botolph and that the poor state of the roads prevented parishioners from attending it. As such, it was taken down probably around 1270 and a new chapel built.

#### Newark

A chapel of St Mary Magdalen stood in Chapel Close.

#### Northholm

Northholm in Eye was a manor created by Abbot Godfrey (14<sup>th</sup> century) who built a chapel there setting aside 100 shillings for a priest to pray for his soul and the souls of the benefactors of Peterborough.

#### Nutcote

Nutcote was a hamlet that was absorbed by expansion of Naseby. The site of a chapel was still evident in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century when a windmill was built on the site. Stones from the chapel ground were used to repair a road in 1720.

#### Old Stratford

Chapel Close marks the site of a former chapel.

#### Orton

Church dating from the 12<sup>th</sup> century now closed but used as a training centre.

#### Oundle

A chapel dedicated to St Thomas of Canterbury existed at the junction of three roads coming from Stoke Doyle, Benefield and Barnwell. It was built by 1324 when Richard Lubbe took sanctuary there and abjured the realm. Several bequests were made to it in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century.

#### Oxney in Peterborough

The chapel of the Virgin Mary has disappeared.

#### Perio

A chapel existed at the deserted village of Perio about three-quarters of a mile from the church at Southwick.

#### Pilsgate

A chapel once stood in the middle of the town.

#### Plumpton

The present church was built in 1822.

#### Preston Capes

A chapel was built at Little Preston before 1272.

#### Silverstone

A chapel existed by around 1200 possibly on the site of the current church built in 1884.

#### Singlesholt

A chapel on this manor in Eye to St Michael was built by Godfrey of Crowland before he became the abbot. It was standing at the time of the Dissolution and the site was among farm buildings in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. (VCH volume II).

#### Stanford

A priest was recorded at Stanford in the Domesday survey and as it was not a small place there may have been a church. Stanford is now a deserted village.

#### Teeton

There was once a chapel of ease to Ravensthorpe but its site is unknown. Bequests were made in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century and it was said to be a mile from the parish church but had no lands of its own.

#### Walcot in Barnack.

There was a chapel of ease to Barnack.

#### Warmington

Near Burystead manor house was a chapel of St Andrew.

#### Weedon

A chapel dedicated to St Werburgh stood near the churchyard in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century.

#### Wigsthorpe

See under Lilford, above.

#### Wythemail

A chapel in this deserted village east of Orlingbury was mentioned in 1357. A priest is mentioned at Wythemail in 1086 but may have been at Orlingbury.

#### Yardley Gobion

There was a chapel dedicated to St Leonard.

Churches in the care of the Churches Conservation Trust are; Aldwinckle All Saints, Blatherwycke Holy Trinity, Cranford St Andrew, Deene St Peter, Furtho St Bartholomew, Holdenby All Saints, Northampton St Peter, Preston Deanery, Upton St Michael, Wakerley St John.

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