

Cheriton Church

A Brief History of the Building

- 1.** Cheriton church is built on a man-made mound which must have existed before the church was built in the 12th century and which has the appearance of a prehistoric round barrow, perhaps dating to 1,000-2,000 B.C. Note how the east end of the chancel is built over a slope (See 5 below).
- 2.** The oldest parts of the church, according to a recent study, are two square attached columns of the 12th century which flank the tower arch at the west end of the nave. This early church may have lacked aisles.
- 3.** The nave belongs to the early 13th century. It has fine 3-bay arcades with round columns. This new (or remodelled) church with aisles would have accommodated a large congregation at a time when the population was growing rapidly.
- 4.** The fine chancel arch and the chancel itself as far as the step before the altar also belong to the early 13th century. Of the same date are the priest's door and 'lancet' windows in the chancel. The large East window dates to the late 14th century, though the stained glass was added in 1881 as a gift from the Rector at the time, the Reverend Alexander Orr.

5. In the 13th century, a Papal Council stressed the belief that the bread and wine at Communion became Christ's body and blood. This gave added sanctity to the vessel in which the wine was held and to the place where this transformation of the wine took place. As a result, the chancel was extended beyond the altar step and, among other changes, a 13th century piscina was placed there in which the holy vessel was washed.
6. In 1744, the Church Register recorded that 'a very sudden and terrible fire broke out in this parish'. The church tower was severely damaged by the fire and had to be rebuilt with 18th century bricks to consolidate the flintwork.
7. The porch was also built or rebuilt with 18th century bricks after the fire and some fine early 14th century carvings were applied to its front.
8. The carvings on the porch front includes male and female heads (perhaps a king and queen) and swirling tracery. These carvings come from a high-status building, but where? Possibly from Bishop's Sutton palace nearby which was in a ruinous state in the 18th century.
9. Also on the front of the porch is this medieval mass dial, also known as a scratch dial because the lines were scratched into the stone. The central hole originally held a pin which cast a shadow to indicate the time for masses (or catholic church services).
10. After the fire of 1744 a new pulpit was needed. The pulpit in this picture was replaced in 1879 when the church was 'restored'. It is now in Tichborne church.

- 11.** This picture of the church was drawn in 1784. A Glebe terrier of 1635 (a record of all the church possessions) lists buildings belonging to the Rectory including 'A Double Pigeon House in the Church Yard.' In the picture, this pigeon house may be seen between the rectory wall (far left) and the church. The pigeons on the roof may have soon gone into the rector's pigeon pie!
- 12.** A photograph of c. 1870 shows the church as it was just before the restoration of the church in 1879. The restoration included a new font and pulpit, replacing the 'old, unsightly pews', a new communion rail in brass and the lectern replaced by new oak lectern provided by the Rector's daughter, and a chimney for installing a new boiler.
- 13.** A late-19th-century painting of the north side of the church shows the ancient mound upon which the church was built. Also visible are rustic villagers, an earlier churchyard wall and a chimney for the new boiler that was installed to heat the church during the restoration of 1879.
- 14.** In the aisles are four stained glass windows by Martin Travers, made in 1919 and depicting four nephews of Mary Egerton who were killed during the First World War. At that time, it would not be uncommon to depict these young gentlemen as knights in shining armour. This picture is of John Egerton, the son of a British ambassador and a Russian princess, who died of wounds in 1916 aged only nineteen.
- 15.** This window to Mrs Mary Egerton, who died in 1937, is also by Martin Travers. She had lived in Cheriton Cottage for over 50 years and was much admired for her kindness to the villagers. Mrs Egerton had no children and it was a sad blow to her when her four nephews were killed in the First World War.



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