



**A WALK-ROUND GUIDE  
TO THE PARISH CHURCH  
OF ST. MARY & ST. NICOLAS,  
SPALDING**

**A WALK-ROUND GUIDE  
TO  
THE PARISH CHURCH  
OF  
ST. MARY AND ST. NICOLAS,  
SPALDING**

**BY  
RONALD STANLEY, F.R.I.B.A.  
AND  
B. MARY STANLEY**

**Illustrations — R. Stanley**

**Photographs — Les Prudden**

**Acknowledgements to Authors of previous Guides.**

## INTRODUCTION

The aim of this guide is to introduce you to a very beautiful building into which people have poured their hopes and fears, their prayer and praise, for 700 years. During that time the building has been constantly changing, but it has remained the focus both of a community of Christians and of a town.

Buildings can become dry museums, but they can also be living things, used creatively by people. There can be a mysterious and wonderful relationship between people and a church building. It should always be the people who are more important, yet we may gain new insights and strength from contact with the building; it is the setting in which our faith is moulded and shaped. So, both people and building may point to the glory and love of God and keep active the strange (and often unpopular) rumour that love is stronger than anything and that its source is the God who showed us what love is like in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

This guide is for us all: parishioners and visitors alike. I hope it will be well used and I am grateful to the authors who worked hard on it and also to the very many people who, through voluntary work and through financial contributions, make the good state of the church possible. I hope, above all, that you will pause to reflect on the point of it all; for if the whole does not lead to a deeper faith in Jesus Christ, then the point will have been missed.

### A Prayer

Almighty God,  
to whose glory this house of prayer is built,  
we praise you for the many blessings  
you have given to those who worship here;  
and we pray that all who seek you in this place may be found by you,  
and being filled with the Holy Spirit  
may become a living temple acceptable to you;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

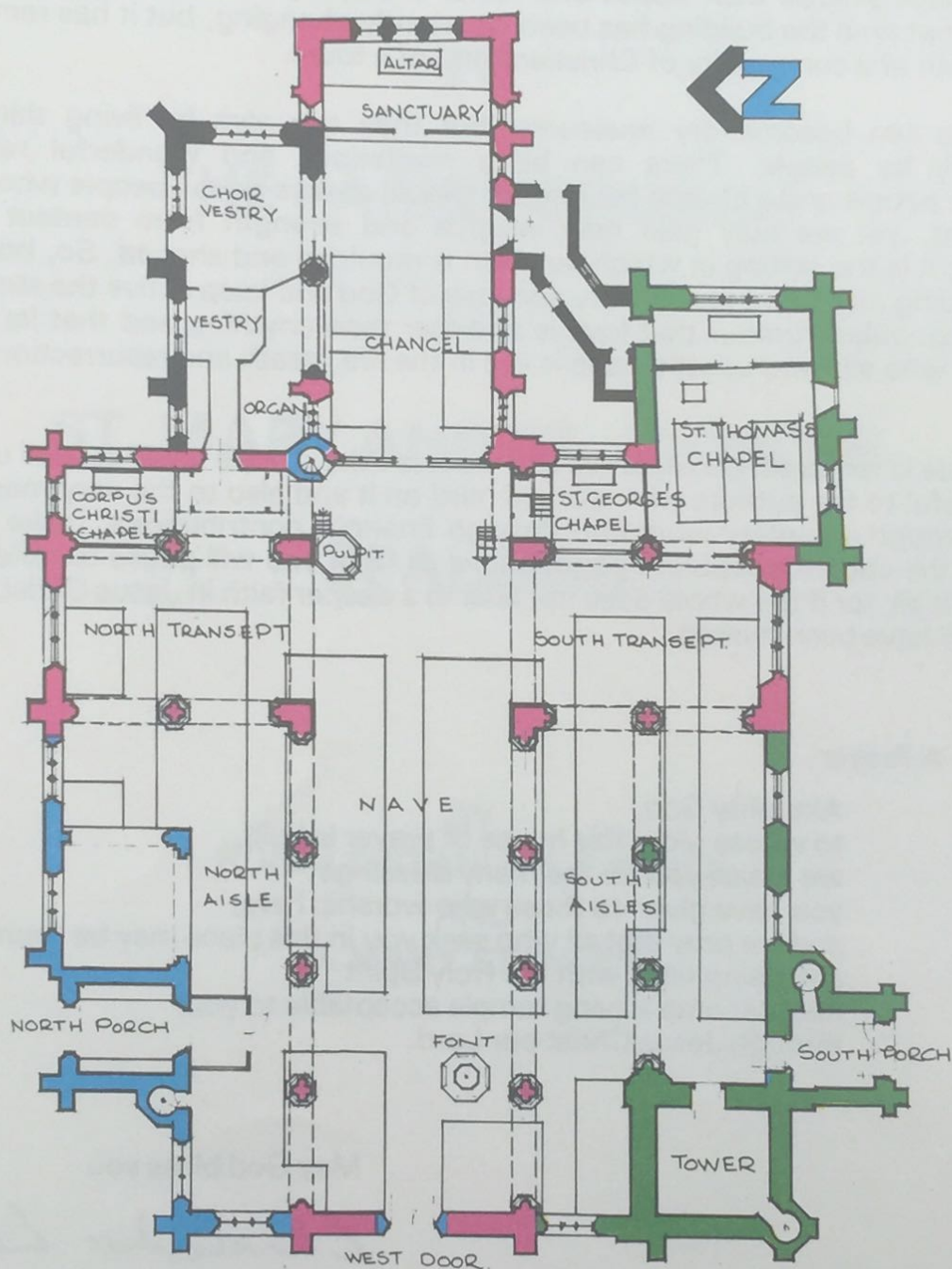
May God bless you

*Christopher Lewis*

Vicar



- KEY**
- EARLY ENGLISH — 13th Century.
  - DECORATED — 14th Century.
  - PERPENDICULAR — 15th Century.
  - VICTORIAN — 19th Century.



The colours on this plan are meant to indicate the general periods when the various parts of the building were constructed and cannot show the dates when many of the alterations to the fabric were carried out.

## A SHORT HISTORY OF THE CHURCH

The present Parish Church of St. Mary and St. Nicolas was built by the Benedictine Priory which existed in Spalding from 1051 to its dissolution under Henry VIII in 1540. The foundations of the present building were laid in 1284 by Prior William de Littleport, to replace the earlier Parish Church, then situated on the Priory boundary, on the site of the present Market Place.

The building incorporated part of the Chapel of St. Thomas the Martyr, and was probably dedicated simply to St. Mary.

The double dedication of St. Mary and St. Nicolas, by which it has been known since the Middle Ages, came from its connection with the Priory, also of that name. The building was finished by Prior Clement Hatfield, Prior from 1293 to 1318, and was cruciform in shape; it consisted of an aisled Nave with six bays, aisled Transepts of two bays, a Chancel without an aisle, and a bell tower.

This early English Church was severe in appearance, both inside and out, having plain lancet windows and a steeply pitched roof, but additions and alterations soon began to be made.

In 1315, the Chapel of St. Thomas of Canterbury was built, opening out of the South Transept.

In 1360, the West aisle of the South Transept, and the South aisle of the Nave were widened, and the outer South aisle added. At this time, the South Porch and the Tower were also built.

In the middle of the 15th century, considerable alterations were made by adding six feet to the pillars, thus raising the Nave roof and the Chancel Arch. The arches were re-set, and the present clerestory windows built over them. Also dating from this time, are the Perpendicular East Window over the Chancel arch, the Rood Staircase and Screen, the Transept Arches, and the great West Window. The spire was perhaps built a little earlier than this.

Later in the century, probably in the time of Prior Robert II, the North Porch and the room over it were built, and other aisles widened.



In the early 16th Century, the wall of the newly-widened Transept began to fall westwards, and an outer court was enclosed, by building a supporting wall between the Transept and the North Porch. It is reported that elaborate plays were performed in the Sheep Market to raise funds for the Church repairs. In 1674, the St. Thomas' Chapel became the home of the Grammar School, and was separated from the Church by the walling-up of the entrance arches. For almost 200 years, the building then suffered from subsidence and decay. In the mid-seventeenth century, the Tower and Spire began to subside in a north-easterly direction, perhaps because of the digging of vaults inside the Church. Extensive cracks appeared in the Tower and Spire, and the westernmost arch of the arcade was walled up to give support. The high-pitched roof was replaced by a flatter-lead-covered one.

High box pews filled the Nave, and in 1758, a three-decker pulpit was built against the west pier of the South Transept.

The Church was extensively restored during the years 1865-7, under the direction of the late Sir Gilbert Scott. The high-pitched roof over the Chancel was erected; the north wall was reconstructed and pierced with two arches to give access to the new aisle housing the organ and including new vestries.

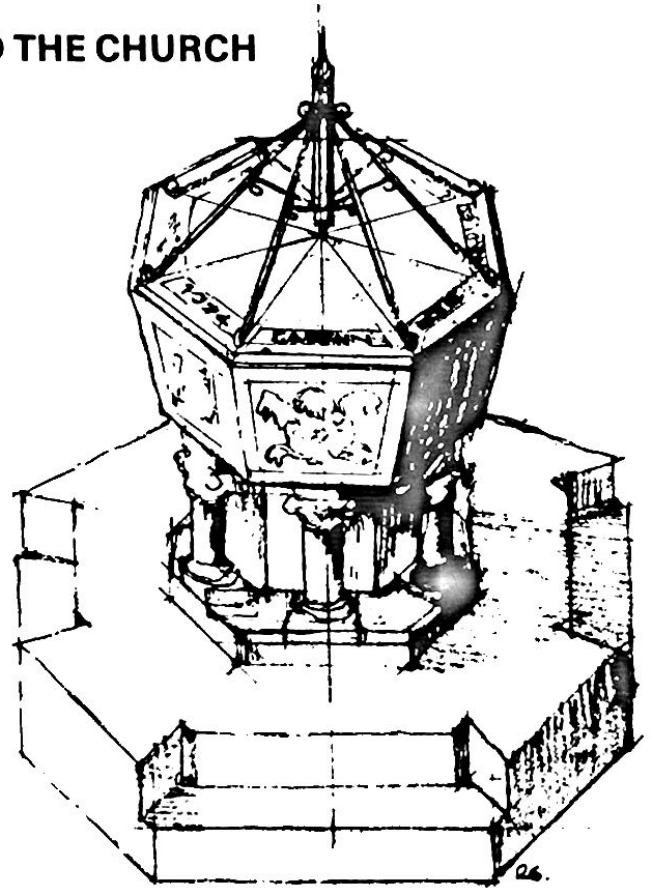
Interesting recent additions include the modern stained glass windows on the South wall (1966) and the decorating of the Chancel ceiling in 1959.

The Organ was rebuilt and resited in 1972. The bulk of the instrument remains inside the North aisle to the Chancel but the "Great" section was moved out into the eastern aisle of the North Transept. It is supported on a platform and has new case-work. The console was moved from the Chancel to a new platform and enclosure by St. George's Chapel.



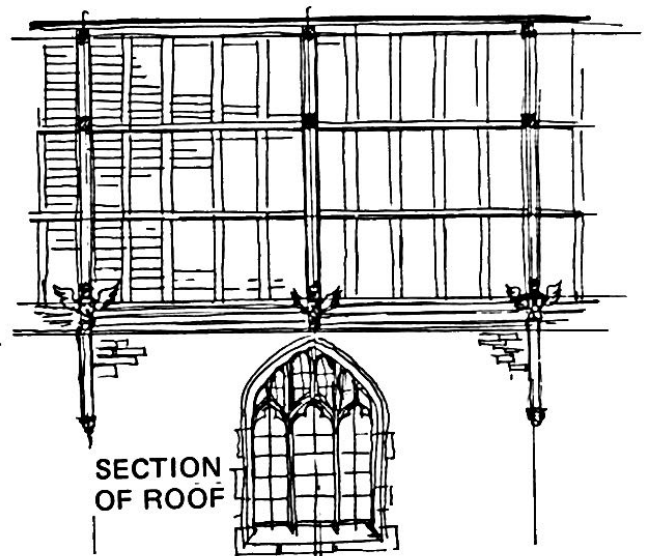
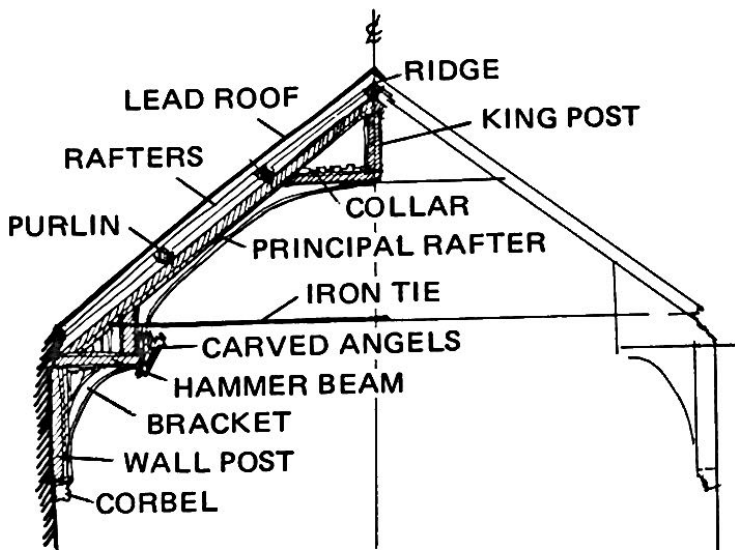
## A WALK AROUND THE CHURCH

The visitor is invited to stand at the West end of the Church underneath the large West window, and observe the Font, which was placed in the Church in 1868, replacing one which was of the post-Reformation period. It stands on a fine plinth, and has a stone octagonal carved bowl which is supported on marble columns. It was designed by Sir Gilbert Scott from suggestions by the then Vicar. The cover was designed by Ronald Stanley, the current Architect to the Fabric, and placed in position in 1975. It was subscribed to by Parishioners, in thanks for the service to the Church of Captain E.J.S. Maples as Vicar's Warden between 1950 to his retirement in 1974. (See illustration). Alongside the Font is a matching oak table which supports the cover during Baptisms, and holds the Bread & Wine and Alms-dish during Services.



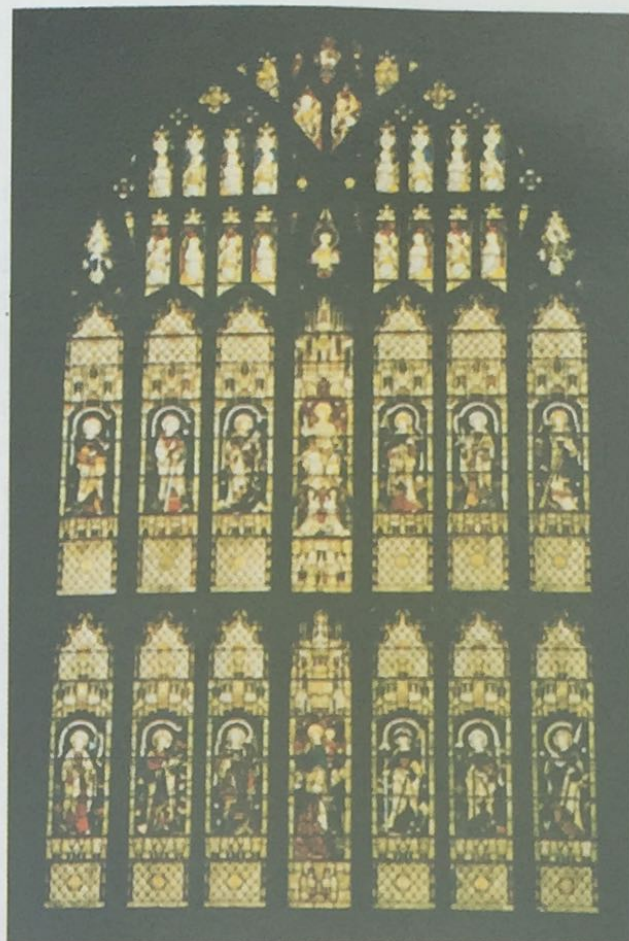
From this position one gets a fine view of the mediaeval hammer-beamed roof which dates from 1450, and is an excellent example of this form of construction. It is in a remarkably good state of preservation and was very thoroughly restored in 1865. At the time it was constructed, the old roof, which was much lower, was taken off, and the arches raised by extending the columns underneath. New walls were built over, which now contain the fine clerestory windows.

The roof is constructed entirely of oak and is decorated with 28 carved angels carrying shields bearing the Instruments of the Passion and other designs. The original concept of the hammerbeamed construction was that it did not need cross members to tie the roof together. There is, however, a tendency for this type of roof to spread, and now iron ties have been introduced to prevent this.





Before leaving this part of the Church, turn round and look at the great West window. One cannot but be impressed by its size and design. The original tracery or stonework to this window was, it is reported, blown in and destroyed by a great gale on the 18th February, 1662. During the same gale, one of the pinnacles from the Tower was blown over and crashed through the Nave roof, causing considerable damage. The window was not properly restored, but was glazed with a series of oblong pieces of glass, and it was not until the great restoration in 1865-1867 that the tracery was fully restored, and new stained glass was inserted into the window. The glass illustrates the Apostles' Creed and was, at the time, considered to be one of the best modern windows in the country.



If one now walks towards the High Altar at the East end of the Church, one passes the six Early English arcades which form the Nave or main body of the Church, and which were raised when the new roof was put on in the 14th century. One then arrives at the main crossing of the Church, with four large stone pillars at each corner. This is the point at which the Transepts cross the main body of the Church. One can still see, high up in the Transept, circular openings which used to be the windows to the outside before the aisles on either side were built and roofed over at their present level. On the left, is the carved oak pulpit, which again dates from the restoration in the last century. The pulpit itself is octagonal in shape and stands on a carved base. It has six sides to the octagon, the remaining two sides being taken up by the steps and wall. Each side is elaborately carved and on each corner stands the carved figure of a Saint. The whole of the pulpit is reputed to have cost 200 guineas. On the right-hand side, stands the fine Victorian lectern which is in the form of a brass eagle supported on a pedestal. To the right again, there is a stone plaque with the names of people who fell in the 1939-1945 war. Surmounting this plaque is a modern sculpture of St. Michael, the Archangel, slaying the dragon, the whole designed by Mr. Lawrence Bond.



Immediately in front now, is the rood screen which divides the Nave from the Chancel. It was reconstructed in 1870 by J. Oldred Scott. Portions of the old screen, which was of the perpendicular period, were incorporated, and this has resulted in a completed structure which still conforms in style very much to that period. Above it hangs the great cross, or rood, which was restored, regilded and painted in 1959.

Behind the door on the left-hand side of the screen, is a rood staircase in an octagonal stone enclosure, which gives access to the top of the screen. The staircase continues upwards with a door at the top on to the Nave roof. It will be noticed that the doorway at the foot of this staircase once had a carved moulding above it, terminated by a fleur-de-lis, but all of this decoration has been roughly hacked away.





an upper room. The school room was entered by a door on the west side, reached by a flight of steps from the outside. In 1881 the Grammar School was moved to new buildings and in 1885 the Chapel was restored and the covered passageway built to connect it with the Chancel. The panelling and furnishings of this Chapel, which are all in carved oak, were the gift of Mr. Leopold Harvey, for 35 years a Churchwarden of the Church. The painting of the Crucifixion which can be seen in the Chapel, was given anonymously to the Church in 1908, and is thought, in part, to be the work of the Dutch painter, van Dyke.





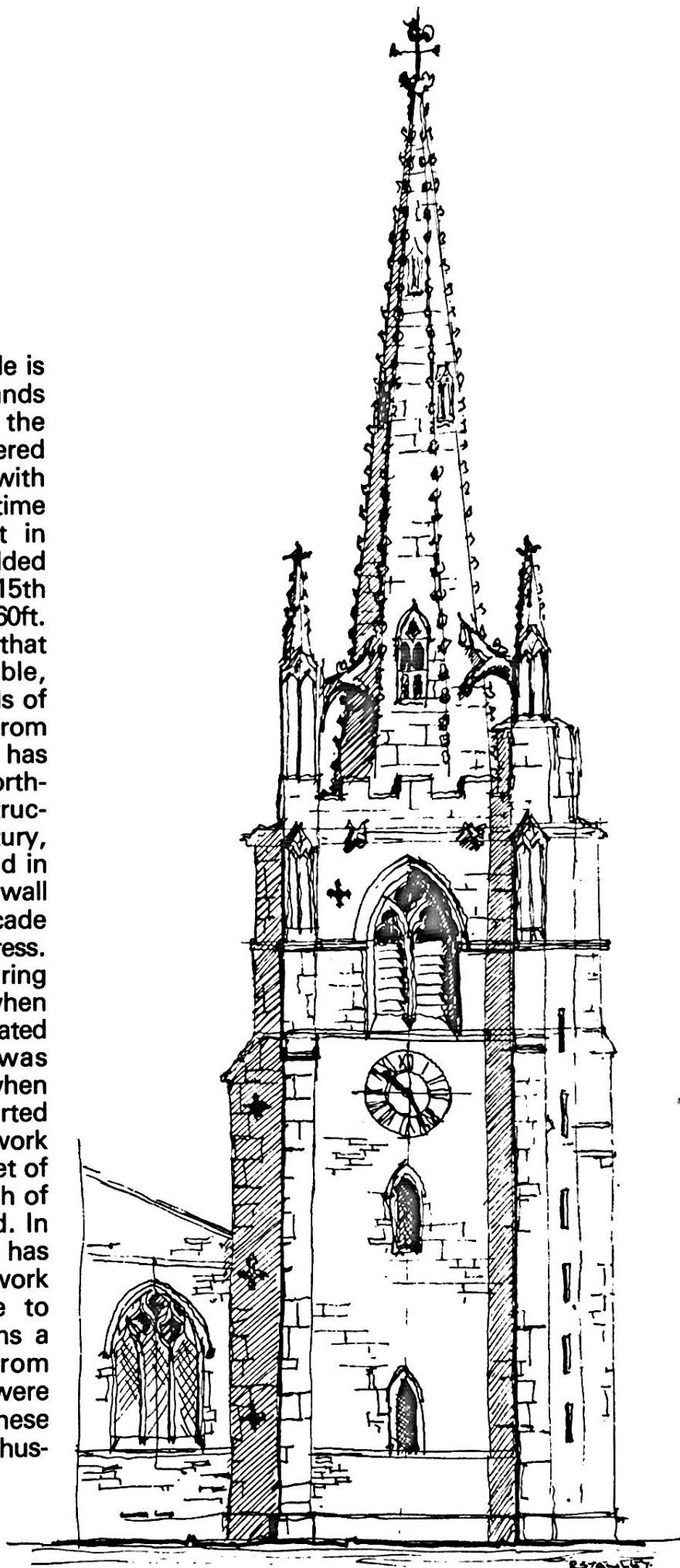
On leaving St. Thomas' Chapel, walk up the south aisle, and notice on your left-hand side, two new stained glass windows, which were placed there in 1966, to a design prepared by H. W. Harvey of York. These memorial windows are of modern design, and are good examples of the present-day craft of stained glass. Full descriptive notes are available at the back of the Church, but briefly, the windows show 'Christ in Study', 'Christ in the search after Truth', and 'Christ in everyday local life'. (see coloured photographs on page 15).

At the end of this aisle, near the south door, turn around and look across the Church towards the north-east. This is a very fine view of the Church, and one is particularly struck by what appears to be a veritable forest of stone columns. If you happen to be looking across when the sun is shining, you will be able to see the play of light and shade upon the columns, and more particularly, the shafts of coloured light which are thrown on to the stonework by the stained-glass windows.





At the end of the south aisle is the door to the Tower, which stands in the south-west corner of the Church. The Tower can be entered and climbed by arrangement with the Clergy, or during the Tuliptime Festival. The Tower was built in about 1360, and the spire added probably in the first half of the 15th century. It stands, in all, about 160ft. (48.5 metres) high, and it is said that when conditions are favourable, one can see the three Cathedrals of Lincoln, Peterborough and Ely from the top of the Spire. The Tower has a distinct lean towards the north-east and has a long record of structural problems. In the 16th century, it became extremely unsafe, and in 1688 it was found necessary to wall up the first or western most arcade of the south aisle to act as a buttress. This wall was finally removed during the 19th century restoration, when the Tower was extensively renovated and strengthened. There was further restoration in 1925, when two concrete floors were inserted and the whole of the stonework grouted. In 1954, the top ten feet of the spire was replaced and much of the perished stonework repaired. In recent years further restoration has been carried out, and more work will shortly have to be done to preserve it. The Tower contains a peal of eight bells dating from between 1629 to 1885, which were recast and rehung in 1925. These bells are rung regularly by an enthusiastic team of ringers.



In the recess below the west window of the south aisle is an interesting bell, bought in about 1840, from the crier of Whaplode. It appears to have served the double purpose of a sacring bell, and 'a little bell to go before the Body of Christ when visiting the sick', and is probably the only pre-Reformation bell in the locality.

Walking back towards the north door, one sees a modern carved oak screen forming an inner porch to the door. On the left, there is a small door and staircase leading to the Chapel of the upper chamber which is above the actual north porch. This small room has a window or slit looking down into the main body of the Church, and it has served a variety of purposes during its history. In the time of King Henry VIII, it was the Church Treasury, in which the plate was kept, and later it was the Town Armoury which every town was obliged by Act of Parliament to provide. In 1637 it was a Public Library but this was more probably for the special use of the Incumbent, and the books were removed in 1715. For the next 200 years it appears to have been used only as a storeroom, but in 1924 it was turned into a Chapel. It again fell into disuse, but has now been recently redecorated and furnished, and is used as a meeting room.

The north aisle looking eastwards, is terminated by the casework to the "Great" part of the restored organ, and at the east end of the outer north aisle is the Chapel of Corpus Christi. This Chapel was restored and put into its present form in 1956. The recessed arch below the window on the left hand side was made to contain a tomb, but the vault is empty and was probably never used.

On the left is a modern screen erected in 1980 to form a vestry and meeting area. The work was carried out using money from a legacy left to the Church by Canon Lancelot Smith, a Vicar of St. John the Baptist Church, Spalding, and a former curate of this parish.

One should leave the Church by the north door, which leads into the porch built about 1496. The ceiling of the porch, which is in stone, is carved to imitate fan tracery.

Notice the Ogee shaped doorway with the three figures over, representing in the centre, Our Lord, and on the left and right The Blessed Virgin Mary and St. Nicholas, to whom the Church is dedicated.





A visit to the Church is not complete without a walk around the outside of the Church. The Churchyard has been much improved in recent years by a selected removal of gravestones, and a general re-ordering. The stone path on the north side leads up to a fine pair of wrought iron gates. It is interesting to note the mounting block in the wall at the side of the gate. Little evidence of the original Early-English Church can be seen from outside, and even the original Early-English windows on the south side of the Transept have been much altered. The Tower, of course, is largely of the Period, but the Spire and graceful flying buttresses and pinnacles are of a later date in the Decorated period. Many of the windows are of the Decorated period also, with flowing tracery. One cannot fail to notice the massive west window, which is in the Perpendicular style. The limestone with which the Church has been built, probably came from the quarries at Barnack, near Stamford, and other quarries in that neighbourhood. This stone weathers extremely well, but there are parts where a softer stone has been used, and there is a constantly ongoing programme of repair and maintenance.

To the west of the Church stands the St. Nicolas Church Hall, and Youth Centre. This building was completed in 1966 shortly after the new Vista roadway was built. This enabled the Church to build a new vehicular access and turning circle within the Churchyard.



At this time, a site was bought, and the new Hall was built, part on this site, and partly on the Churchyard. The Hall is modern in style, built with hand-made bricks from Stamford and it contains a large Hall 60ft. x 34ft. (18.2 metres x 10.3 metres), a smaller Hall or Meeting Room 34ft. x 20ft. (10.3 metres x 6 metres), a stage, coffee lounge, and changing rooms. The building is very extensively used by the Church Youth Organisations, and Church Members, and is also the centre for an Open Youth Club. The rooms are also let out on hire. It was built at a cost, fully furnished, of approximately £25,000, and was paid for with the help of a grant from the Ministry of Education plus subscriptions from parishioners and townspeople.





## THE CHURCH PLATE

The Church has an exceptionally fine collection of silver, the earliest being an Elizabethan Chalice date 1562. This was given to the Church in 1870 as a thankoffering for preservation from fire, together with a modern matching silver paten made at that time.

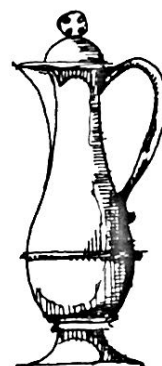
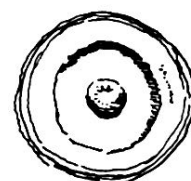
A fine pair of flagons and a large silver alms dish were given by John Hobson in 1676.

A very large silver-gilt Chalice, and a silver gilt paten and alms dish were the gifts of Mary Deacon of Peterborough in the early 18th century.

There are interesting reproductions of the Lincoln Chalice and Paten of 1250 A.D., presented in 1930 as a memorial.

The silver flagon, gilt inside, bears the Silver Jubilee hall-mark of 1935.

Much of this precious silver is in use at present, and may be seen displayed, on occasions such as the Tulip Time Festival.

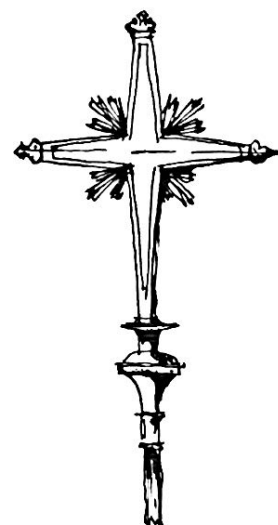


## THE PARISH REGISTERS

These date from 1538, and give a complete record of the life of the people of the parish from that time. They are often consulted by visitors researching for historical or family connections.

## THE HATCHMENTS

Over the pillars in the centre aisle are the hatchments of some notable local families. (A hatchment is a lozenge-shaped panel used to depict the armorial bearings of a deceased person. These were carried in the funeral procession, and subsequently hung in the Church. The word is said to be a corruption of "achievement"). Details of each design may be found at the base of each pillar.



# The Vicars

Date Mentioned	VICARS	PATRONS	PERPETUAL CURATES	PATRONS
1228 or 9	WILLIAM de HAUTEBARG, (ALKBOROUGH), Chaplain	PRIOR AND CONVENT OF SPALDING Spalding Priory became Patron of the living about 1150	JOHN HOUSON Signed transcript of Parish Register	THE CHOWN
1249 or 50	ROBERT OF HUNGERFORD, Chaplain	PRIOR AND CONVENT OF SPALDING	JOHN JONES Paid clerical tax	THE CHOWN
1277	RICHARD OF SPALDING, Deacon During this incumbency the erection of the present Parish Church was begun (circa 1284)	PRIOR AND CONVENT OF SPALDING	W. WILLIAMS, Curate	THE CHOWN
1311	ALEXANDER de ROUCEBY, Chaplain	PRIOR AND CONVENT OF SPALDING	TRISTRAM ? Signed transcript of Parish Register	THE CHOWN
1321	WALTER de ROUCEBY, Chaplain	PRIOR AND CONVENT OF SPALDING	WILLIAM BROWNE, Curate	THE CHOWN
Not known	ROGER COLYN	PRIOR AND CONVENT OF SPALDING	JOHN HUTCHINSON Held office until 1607	THE CHOWN
1359	WILLIAM de MERES	PRIOR AND CONVENT OF SPALDING	Buried in June 1655	
Not known	GILBERT FAUNE He was Vicar in 1391 when with others he founded the Guild of the Holy Trinity in the Parish Church	PRIOR AND CONVENT OF SPALDING		
1408	WILLIAM HULL, Priest	PRIOR AND CONVENT OF SPALDING		
1413	JOHN WAYNEFLETE, Priest	PRIOR AND CONVENT OF SPALDING		
No institutions of Vicars are recorded after 1413 for in 1462 Spalding Priory received Papal confirmation of permission, given at an earlier date, to appropriate the vicarage as well as the rectory of Spalding (i.e., to take the entire endowment of the living) and to provide for the cure of souls either by a monk of the house or a hired secular chaplain. The names of some of these chaplains only have been preserved, as they did not require institution and are therefore not recorded in the episcopal lists of institutions				
Date Mentioned	PAROCHIAL CHAPLAINS PROVIDED BY SPALDING PRIORY	PATRONS	PERPETUAL CURATES	PATRONS
1500	ROBERT SCARBOROUGH JOHN LOWND WILLIAM PARKER JOHN SPARROW ADLARD TAVERNER JOHN BYRDE JOHN WEST JOHN LEE, Parochial Chaplain	They appeared at a Visitation in this year	ROBERT RAM, Minister A great Puritan and supporter of the Parliament during the Civil War. Buried in March, 1657	THE FORTRES
1519	ROBERT GEE, Curate	In this year it was stated that whereas previously there had been two parochial chaplains provided by the Priory, there was now only this one	ROBERT PIERSON, Minister Person was still "Minister" in July 1661 when his son Nathaniel was baptized	THE FORTRES
1526	JOHN FAWDES, Stipendiary	These all paid a tax levied on the clergy in this year. There is every probability that the two first named were the parochial chaplains	EDMUND MAULEVERER, Clerk "Minister of the Parish." Buried in September 1664	THE FORTRES
1539	RICHARD BELL LEONARD SWIFT RICHARD LAWLEY THOMAS GENE JOHN FAWCON ROBERT GEE THOMAS LOVE, Stipendiary	Richard Bell was possibly chaplain to the Corpus Christi Guild At the same time Leonard Sweyt and Richard Lawley (see under 1546) were described as chantry priests	MARTIN JOHNSON, B.D. Died in 1679 THOMAS PALMER, Curate WILLIAM PENDLETON His last entry in the Parish Register for 3rd October, 1709	THE FORTRES
1551	ROBERT GEE, Curate	At the dissolution of the monasteries churches appropriated to them and served by stipendiary chaplains became perpetual curacies, the maintenance of the curate being a charge on the new owners of the rectories and vicarages (i.e., the endowments). Dates of licensing to the perpetual curacy of Spalding are not recorded in the Bishops' Registers until 1711 and onwards. Since 1869 perpetual curates are legally to be deemed and styled vicars	STEPHEN LYON, M.A. A Huguenot refugee, native of Rouen. He seems to have been a Perpetual Curate from 1709 or to the date of his licensing till later. Buried before the High Altar	THE FORTRES
1559	JOHN FAWCON ROBERT GEE THOMAS LOVE, Stipendiary	At the same time Leonard Sweyt and Richard Lawley (see under 1546) were described as chantry priests	JOHN JOHNSON JOHN DINHAM Buried in the Chancel MAURICE JOHNSON, D.D. WILLIAM MOORE, D.D. Buried in the middle of the Nave EDWARD MOORE, M.A. Canon of Lincoln. Rural Dean of West Elloe The church was restored in 1865-7 Vicar is the title of the incumbent after 1869	THE FORTRES THE FORTRES WILLIAM WILLIAMS, surviving Feeoffee THE FORTRES THE FORTRES
1549	HUGH MERGESON, Curate	Spalding Priory was dissolved in 1540. At the dissolution of the monasteries churches appropriated to them and served by stipendiary chaplains became perpetual curacies, the maintenance of the curate being a charge on the new owners of the rectories and vicarages (i.e., the endowments). Dates of licensing to the perpetual curacy of Spalding are not recorded in the Bishops' Registers until 1711 and onwards. Since 1869 perpetual curates are legally to be deemed and styled vicars	MAURICE HOWARD MARSDEN, M.A. RICHARD BULLOCK, M.A. Canon of Lincoln. Rural Dean of West Elloe EDWARD POUNTNEY GOUGH, M.A. BASIL GORDON NICHOLAS, M.A. Canon of Lincoln. Rural Dean of West Elloe PATRICK CHARLES ALEXANDER CARNERY, M.A. Canon of Lincoln MICHAEL HENRY RANDALL SYNGE, M.A. Canon of Lincoln DEREK GRAHAM JAKEMAN, M.A. Canon of Lincoln CHRISTOPHER ANDREW LEWIS PH.D.	THE FORTRES THE FORTRES THE FORTRES THE FORTRES THE FORTRES THE FORTRES THE FORTRES THE FORTRES THE FORTRES THE FORTRES
1551	ARTHUR BANEBRIDGE, Curate HUMPHREY TYPINGS ROBERT HOODS THOMAS LOVE, Curate The two "Curates" of this year seem to represent the two "parochial chaplains" of the pre-reformation period	SIR JOHN CURTES, tutor to King Edward VI., was granted Spalding Priory in the third year of the reign (1549-50). It is said to have been resumed by the Crown in the reign of Queen Mary		
1562	ROBERT HOODE, Clerk Signed transcript of Parish Register. in June, 1571	THE CROWN		