

St John the Baptist Colsterworth



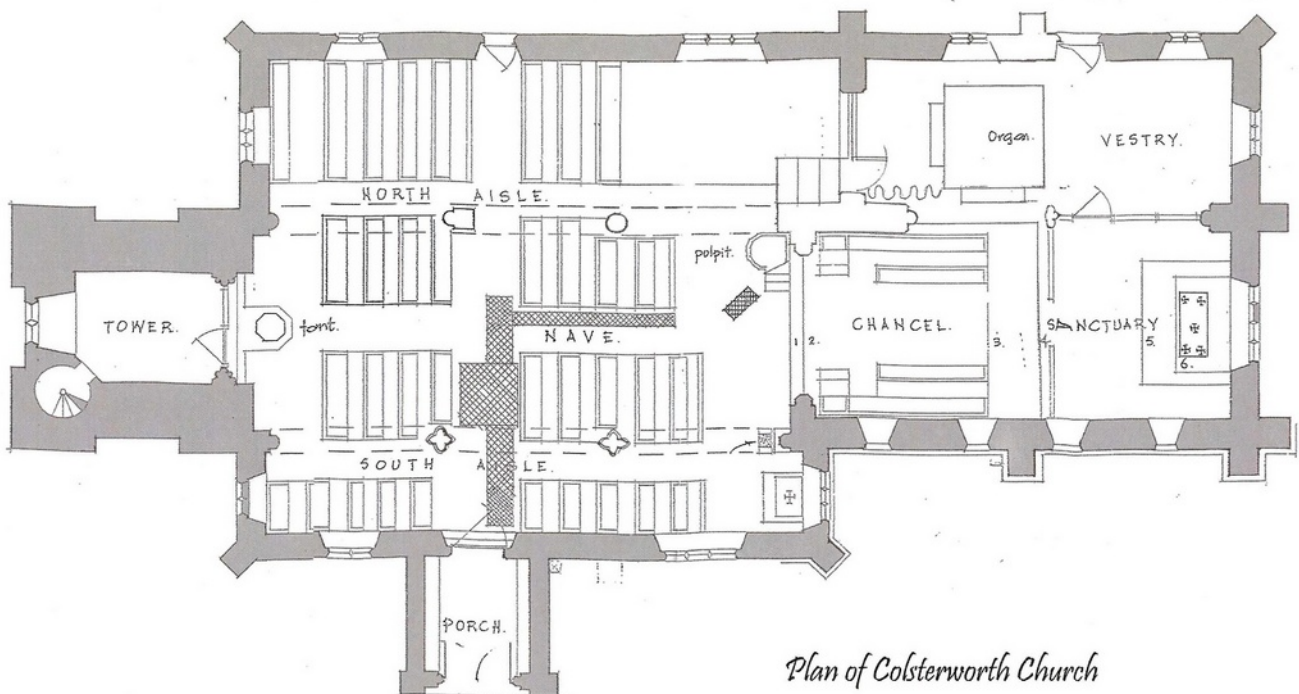
This guide is designed to provide visitors with an insight into the key features of our church. It is not intended to be all-embracing. A free copy can be taken from our website and those interested in more detailed study should also consult our website www.colsterworth5.org.uk and view:

A walk around the Church

A One Thousand Year Journey around the Church of St John the Baptist

A Statement of Significance.

We hope you enjoy your visit. If you wish to help with church costs, £50 per day, please use the donations box.



Plan of Colsterworth Church

The Church Building



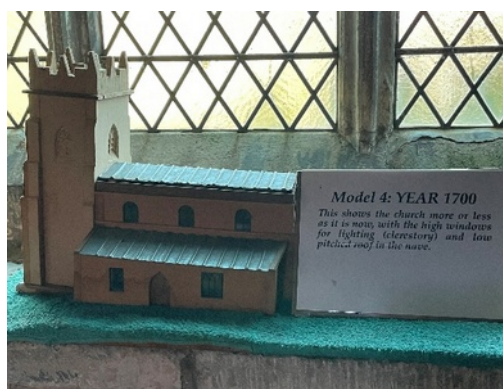
Our church building dates back to Saxon times, as evidenced by the herring-bone pattern stone in the wall over the north aisle arches (see above), meaning that parts of the original building are still in use after some 1300 years. As with many old buildings there have been additions and alterations. The square pillar marks the north west corner of the original building, and the tower, originally separate from the church, was built in stages by the Normans from circa 1300. Sometime later it was joined to the then existing building with the line of the roof being raised; the original line is visible at the west end of the church. It is believed that some of the stone used came from the ruins of a nearby priory, west of the church, the other side of the River Witham which, after a circuitous route, eventually flows into the sea at Boston.

Whilst the interior walls of the church are now bare stone, in the 16th and 17th Centuries the church would have been lavishly decorated, with white painted plaster on the walls and banners in the nave. The holes in the north wall are vetruvial jars, inserted to improve acoustics. Regrettably the plaster was removed in the mid 19th Century.

As with all old buildings, each alteration brings its own problems, an example being the south door entrance which opens onto steep downward steps. At some stage the south side of the church was built up, possibly to cover mass graves necessary as a result of the Black Death in the mid 1300's. Certainly the churchyard to the south is at a higher level than the land in the lane to the south and the foundations of the property on the other side of the lane. Hence the steps! The slope of the floor from the chancel steps to the tower, a drop of nearly 60cms, is unusual, and

occurs in only a handful of churches in England. Note the differing heights of the pillars, made necessary because of the slope.

The 4 models on the window sills (and below) show the changes made over the years, albeit not all were planned; the absence of a spire, if it ever existed, a feature of model 3, may have been storm damage rather than an alteration!



The Tower



The base of the tower is believed to date from 1200-1300. An inscription on the south wall just visible (see above) credits Thomas de Somerby 1305 as being instrumental in building the tower, which was finally finished with the battlements and pinnacles in the 1400s.



There are a number of marks on the walls, both inside and out, believed to be stonemason markings and dedication stones.

Gargoyles feature near the top of each corner, three with faces leering down depicting the hideousness of sin and a fourth (on the NE corner) showing a crude backside (the picture below shows 2 of the 4).



The walls are of varying thickness ranging from 4 feet to around 2 feet at the top.

Inside the tower, the bell ropes are on view together with various details of bell ringing and a locked door to a narrow steep stone spiral staircase to the clock room, the floor of which can be seen from the tower floor. The staircase continues to the bell room and thereafter ladders to a trapdoor give access to the roof. The staircase is not open to the public.

The clock dates from 1854 and is by Messrs William Thomas of Lincoln. It is a hand-wound seven-day clock, with two concrete cylinder weights being raised from the base of the tower to shoulder height in the clock room, roughly a total of 10 metres. It is wound twice each week to minimise the cylinder lifts. It is a feature of the village and we rely on public donations to cover repair costs.

Bells

There are six bells with each marked with the maker's name or motto and date:

Treble: 'Tobias Norris cast me in 1684'

2nd: 'God Save the King. Hardell J. Whittle

Tobias Norris cast me in 1674'

3rd: 'Non clamor sed amor catat in aure Dei,1613'

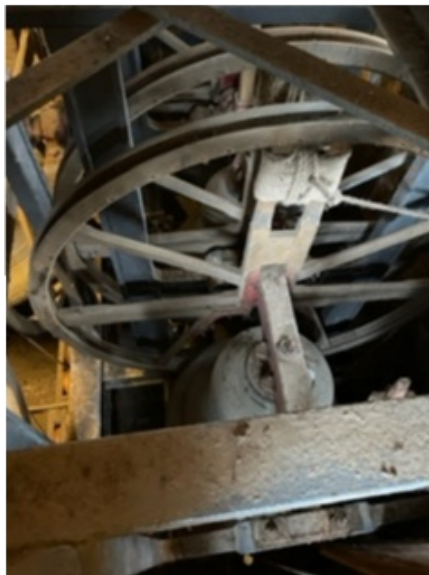
From constant use became cracked and, in 1859, recast by

Messrs Taylor of Loughborough, but believed not in tune with the others.

4th & Tenor: Both made by Messrs Taylor of Loughborough in 1911 when all the bells were rehung on a new steel frame.

5th: 'God Save the King. Tobias Norris cast me in 1684'

The bells are rung on special occasions.



The Font

The font is a mixture of very old and nearly new, meaning that the shaft, or pedestal, dates back to around 1170 whereas the bowl is a replica of the original Norman bowl and is only about 150 years old! It is possible that the original was broken when the spire fell through the nave roof. That said, it is by no means certain there was a spire, the evidence being a picture drawn around 1650 by a young Isaac Newton, aged 8 at that time. A replacement bowl, possibly from another church, and the original shaft were then moved near to a fire where the pulpit is now situated. Unfortunately this bowl cracked and disintegrated when the font was moved to its current position, hence the “new” replica bowl.



The Runic Cross

The remains of the cross were found buried near today's pulpit and has been dated as between 684 and 700. It is a preaching cross, and if that was its original position, it is further evidence of the age of the original building and its use as a place of worship. An alternative view is that it was originally sited at the junction of Ermine Street (now High Dyke) and the Great North Road.



The Chancel

The chancel, as seen today, appears to be the third and with a brass plaque on the south wall purports to honour God & Sir Isaac Newton.



The original chancel was replaced in 1770 at the instigation of the Rev Dodwell whose 'hideous barn-like construction' was replaced by Rev John Mirehouse in 1876 and from that date a series of additions including pews, the pulpit, priests and choir stalls together with, in 1897, a high quality organ.

It is unfortunate that, in their enthusiasm for an organ and vestry, our Victorian forefathers destroyed the Newton manorial aisle, where it is believed Sir Isaac Newton's parents are buried. Thus a memorial plaque to Sir Isaac Newton, denoting his famous 'gravity' discovery and that 3 generations of his family are buried nearby, is obscured by organ pipes. Furthermore a sundial, carved when Newton was aged 9, is part of the north wall in a narrow corridor behind the organ. Both items were donated by the Turnor family, descendants of Newton and owners of Woolsthorpe Manor, his home, in 1876. (See under Newton in this guide) In addition a chancellery was paved over, thus possibly covering the graves of the Newton family

Much of the chancel appears to be designed to recognise the importance of the Mirehouse family, with father, Rev W Mirehouse being immediately followed by his son, Rev J Mirehouse who ensures that the family name is remembered. The brass plaque includes the Mirehouse coat of arms and the carved face of Rev W Mirehouse looks down from the pillar to the right of the organ.



The large stained glass window behind the altar is in memory of Rev W Mirehouse, as are stained glass windows in the south wall, all donated by Rev J Mirehouse, and the oak screen to the left of the altar is in memory of his grandparents!



Perhaps the most striking feature of the chancel is the reredos below the window in the east wall, a mosaic of the Last Supper with St Peter and St Paul standing on either side. It is in memory of Mrs Ord, the superintendent of the Sunday School for many years, and commissioned by her daughter. Mrs Ord is possibly unique in that the stained glass window in the tower opposite is also in her memory. There cannot be many who feature at opposite ends of a church!



The chancel also houses other plaques and furniture given in memory of incumbents over the years.

Stained Glass Windows

The chancel east window behind the altar is the largest window and was restored, with original stone, in the 1870's after being removed in 1770. The four lights depict scenes from the Crucifixion and Resurrection.



On the south wall of the chancel four windows depict scenes from the life of St John the Baptist



The south aisle window shows the story of the Good Samaritan.



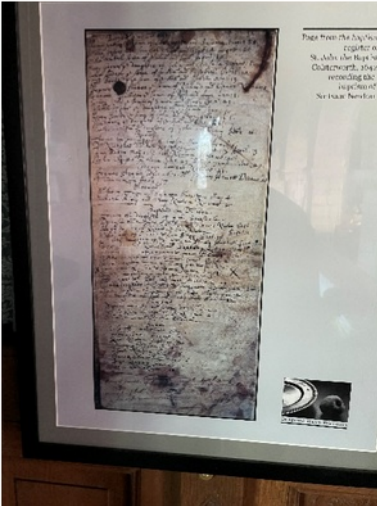
The north aisle window facing west features the patron saints of England - St George, Scotland - St Andrew, and France - St Denis, with the window facing north showing St Patrick, patron saint of Ireland, and St Hugh of Lincoln.



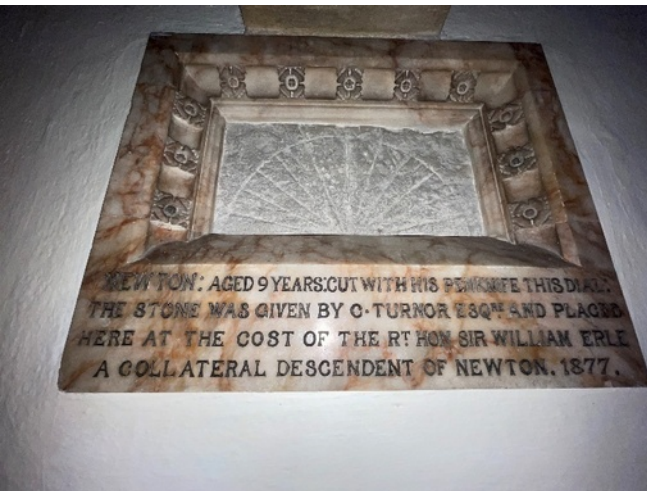
Sir Isaac Newton

The Newton family lived in Woolsthorpe for a number of years and were regular church attendees. Isaac, born on Christmas Day 1642, grew up in Woolsthorpe Manor and was associated with the church throughout his life. Although, given his importance, he was buried in Westminster Abbey, it is believed he wanted to be buried in the church, where other members of his family lay. There is documentary evidence of financial donations he made and, despite being a great scientist who wrote papers covering maths and physics, he was also interested in theology and wrote more theological papers than scientific.

Sir Isaac was baptised in the church and a copy of the christening record, which sadly also records his father's death some two months earlier, is on display.



A sundial, carved by Isaac as a child, is now incorporated in the north wall with access through the wooden door at the east end of the north aisle.



Another sundial, on the outside of the church, was donated by Newton.



The black alabaster head and shoulders bust of Newton is believed to be a copy of one by Roubiliac, 1751.



The memorial hidden by organ pipes mentioned earlier



Remembering the Fallen

Honouring those who have given their lives is much in evidence in the church. It is used annually to display Remembrance Day wreaths after they have been removed from the War Memorial in the village. The flags of the Colsterworth British Legion, now no longer in existence, are displayed along with the names of local people who gave their lives.



The Credence Table, located at the centre of the church, given in memory of the crew of a Lancaster bomber DV226, lost over Germany in 1943, is a more poignant reminder.

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Perhaps the saddest reminder of war is the window at the western end of the north aisle given by the widow of Captain Charles Bland, killed in action on April 23rd 1915 soon after his daughter was born. Close by, a window in the north wall is in memory of Mrs Bland, a widow until her death in 1956 (See Stained Glass Windows)

Colsterworth Village School

There has always been a close association between the school and the church. The original building, now a private house, is located just west of the churchyard on the north side of the church. The oak screen at the eastern end of the north aisle remembers Mr Frederick Ball and his family. Mr Ball was Headmaster for 35 years from 1889.



Another long serving headmaster, Mr Philip Isaac, 1953 to 1978, is remembered by the representation of the church in painted clay tiles completed by the school's pupils.



Today as a Church School, the rector is a frequent visitor and services are held in the church at least once each term.

We hope you enjoy your visit. If you wish to help with church costs, £50 per day, please use the donations box.