



# Christian Malford All Saints Church Brief History

All Saints Church, Christian Malford, dates, in common with other churches in the area, from the thirteenth century; it was undoubtedly built on the site of an earlier church. Unfortunately, all that remains of the original church is a twelfth century font. In the thirteenth century the church consisted of the chancel and nave; the aisle and small chapel were added in the fourteenth century and the tower at a later date.



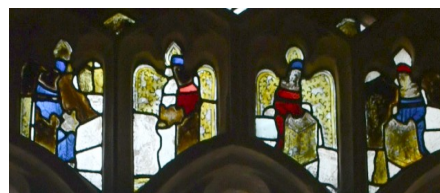
You enter the church through the south porch and a thirteenth century door, this door still has the original large flat headed nails. The door is a hundred years older than the wall in which it stands because the builders moved it from the original south wall of the nave, which followed the lines of the pillars, when they added the side aisle chapel in the fourteenth century.

The Font (1), with its characteristic Norman design, is a fine example of twelfth century work; originally it may have had a foot or stem. It probably stood in an earlier church on the same site as the present Church; regrettably, it is the only piece of twelfth century or Norman work remaining in the church.

The stonework of the east window (2) in the chancel is from the thirteenth century; its type is known as “plate tracery” from the appearance of the upper lights having been cut out of stone like plates. The window (3) in the south wall of the sanctuary is of the same period; note the dog-tooth design over the window.

The one remaining lancet window (4) is at the back of the church in the north wall of the nave. It is likely that originally there would have been a row of these on either side of the thirteenth century Church. Those on the southern wall would have made way for the arcading when the aisle was added in the fourteenth century. Those in the north wall probably remained until the fifteenth century when the old windows were replaced by larger windows to accommodate the coloured glass which had become fashionable.

There are some fine examples of this fifteenth century glass remaining in the church – figures representing “the four Latin Doctors of the Church” can be seen in the upper lights of the window (5) in the north wall of the nave, figures depicting the Holy Family have been incorporated into the window (6) in the chancel next to the screen and possibly the best piece of glass, representing the “Annunciation”, can be seen in the window (11) above the font. The fifteenth century was a great time for Church restoration in Europe; in Britain, the windows of this period are identified by the perpendicular shafts in the tracery, hence the nickname “perpendicular” was given to work of this period. There must have been a substantial restoration programme in Christian Malford as you will see “perpendicular” windows all around the Church.



The level of the chancel was raised during substantial restorations in the nineteenth century; unfortunately, it throws out the proportions of the sanctuary and has raised the floor so much that the sedilia (7) cannot be used. Note the original thirteenth century string-course and the mouldings of the sedilia. Two brackets (8, rescued from the scrap heap, are fixed in the walls near the altar rail.

The canopied screen before the chapel and the less ornate chancel screen are both fine examples of fifteenth century work; made partly of plaster they are difficult to repair. The chancel screen no longer fits the arch which was replaced in the restorations at the end of the last century.

The Chapel has suffered at the hands of the Iconoclasts<sup>1</sup>: the remains of the once canopied niches (9) either side of the east window no doubt once housed beautiful figures. Also, note the damage to the piscina (10) on the south wall; the remains of the crocketed shafts and pinnacles give some idea as to how beautiful the chapel must have been. There was probably a reredos as the grooves were it fitted can still be seen. The nail marks in the roof timbers indicate that there was once a ceiling.

Between the Chapel and the chancel is the blocked-up doorway to the rood loft; also at the east end of the organ is the squint.

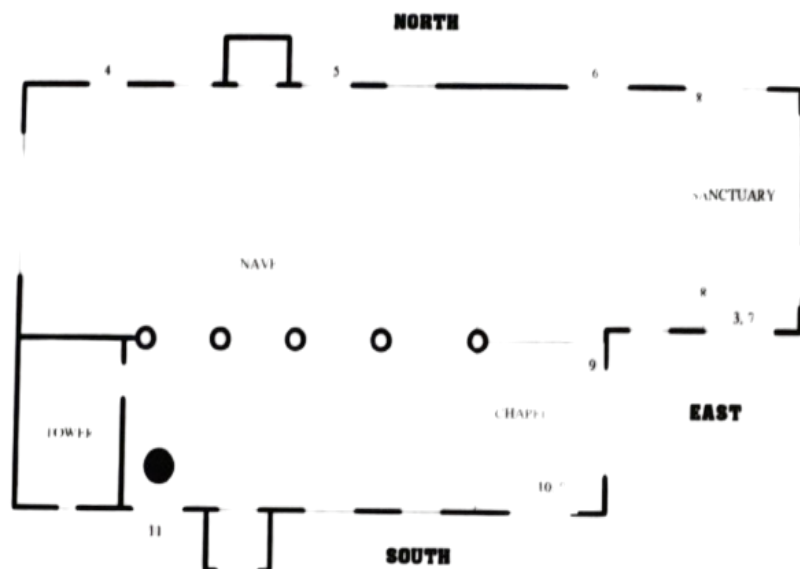
The Priest's vestry is in the fourteenth century north porch. The windows in the north porch are from the fifteenth century; there is also a beautiful small niche hidden away over the door of the Priest's vestry.



The tower is 48 foot to the top of the parapet: it was a later addition to the church and though not particularly aesthetic it is striking feature on the local landscape.

The Church is built on a bed of stiff clay which lies on a bed of sand. The sand drains the water from the clay which expands when it gets wet and contracts when dry so there is continual movement and the results are apparent by the continual cracking of the walls. The subsidence is particularly noticeable in the Chapel, buckled and twisted glass in the windows as well as cracks in the walls. The Priest's vestry has been under-pinned to a depth of ten foot; apparently this has had little stabilising effect. It remains a miracle that the Church has stood for so long!

1. Iconoclasts – Breaker of images; those who wished to abolish images in Church.



Source: Christian Malford All Saints