

TONY BOSTOCK'S HISTORY NOTES: DAVENHAM

St WILFRID'S CHURCH & CHURCH PROPERTY

Early History

The parish church of Davenham is one of only a few mentioned in the Domesday Survey and therefore its history predates 1086. However very little is known of the church's history during the medieval and early modern periods.

The dedication to St Wilfrid is not uncommon in Cheshire. This saintly man Wilfrid was born in Northumberland about 634 and became one of the greatest and also one of the most controversial English Saints. He directly influenced the move away from Celtic to the more orderly Roman church practices and is best known for championing and winning the case for the Roman, as opposed to the Celtic method of calculating the date of Easter at the famous Synod of Whitby in 664. He became Bishop of York in 664 and Archbishop of York in 706 with a See covering the whole of Northumbria. He built magnificent stone churches at Ripon and Hexham, acquired vast landholdings and established monasteries in Northumbria, Mercia, Sussex and the Isle of Wight and converted Sussex, the last vestige of paganism, to Christianity. He died in 709.

The first known priest at Davenham is Ralph de Vernon who occurs about the year 1190 and who was probably a younger son of the Vernon family who held the Barony of Shipbrook and were lords of much of the land that formed the parish. At this same time Warren de Vernon held the advowson as patron of the church. Following a dispute as to who had the right to be rector and patron of the church of St Wilfrid, in 1284/5 the prior of Birkenhead Priory appeared before the justiciar of Chester and acknowledged that the advowson along with half an acre of glebe land to belong to Ralph de Vernon, for which he received a payment of seventy marks (£96 13s 4d).¹ The next known parson was Robert de Redeswell who in 1287 received £60 for his corn lying in Bostock and Davenham from three gentlemen.² He also held the office of Archdeacon of Chester and seems to have remained at Davenham until his death in 1314. (A full list of rectors will be added as an appendix).

The Church Building

The church is built in red sandstone ashlar with a slate roof. Its plan consists of a west tower, a five-bay nave with a clerestory, north and south aisles, a chancel with a north vestry and a south chantry chapel, and a southwestern porch. The tower has an octagonal spire with three tiers of lucarnes. Unfortunately the building we see today is 'modern', a product of much Victorian rebuilding.

During the time that Robert de Redeswell was priest at Davenham the previous wooden structure was rebuilt, or partly rebuilt in stone. In 1290 he had permission to take 300 tons of stone from the forest of Mara (Delamere), probably the Eddisbury area, in order that he could rebuild the chancel.³ It is likely that during the centuries after this here many alterations and additions.

A plan of the church made in 1635, and reproduced twenty-two years later, shows a chancel, nave and side aisles, with chapels at the east end of each aisle. Significantly the plan indicates that there were three pillars along the south side of the nave with only two shown on the north side, presumably the corresponding third was missed off: a nave therefore of three bays. It seems that the columns were not in the same locations as indicated on architects plans of the mid-19th century as the two western most originally straddled the south and north door

¹ Ormerod iii, pp. 240-2. Also *Cheshire Sheaf*, July 1920, p. 62, and June 1923, p.47

² *Chester County Court Rolls 1259-1297*, Chetham Society (1925) p.64

³ *Cheshire Sheaf*, December 1937, p. 108 citing Calendar of Close Rolls, 1290

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positions. The chancel was rebuilt in 1680, when a new spire was also built. The chancel was rebuilt again in 1785 and in 1870, when the transepts were added. The nave was rebuilt in 1844 and the tower with its landmark spire in 1850, and the chancel and transepts are from 1870.⁴ The lords of Leftwich had a small chapel on the north side. In 1832 plans were made for a new gallery and following completion George Latham, an architect from Nantwich drew plans of the church and gallery.

In 1842 architect Edmund Sharpe of Lancaster was commissioned for plans to rebuild the church, except for the tower. Plans were drawn: Groundplan (after work); Gallery (after work); Groundplan (after work); Gallery (after work); Section (before work and after work)

In the churchyard is a table tomb to the memory of William Worthington of Leftwich, a merchant who died in 1808, and members of his family, which is a Grade II listed monument.⁵ Also listed Grade II is the lych-gate which dates from the late 19th century,⁶ and was designed by E. G. Paley.⁷

The Interior

The plan dated 1635 was created to indicate where people might sit as owners of property in the parish had rights to certain pews. The hereditary ownership of a pew, or right to enjoy, a pew was a treasured privilege and so it perhaps not surprising that from time to time these rights were disputed.

In January 1689 Cheney Bostock of Leftwich was involved in such a dispute. The right centred around the ownership of lands known as 'Clayton's Tenement' a parcel of lands associated with Old Brett Hall in Leftwich. Sixty-nine years old John Leftwich stated that he remembered that the previous owner of Old Brett Hall, Mr Wych (William Wych of Alderley) had sold the property to Cheney following the death of a tenant named Robert Clayton, and that by 1688 the property had passed to Cheney's son William. A Thomas Yearsley of Leftwich, aged thirty-seven stated that his mother had used the seat with Clayton's permission as it was nearer to the pulpit and she had been hard of hearing. Other witnesses testified that the tenement was associated with a particular seat in the church and reference was made to a plan of the church made in 1635. Those who opposed Cheney's right to what had been Mr Wych's seat said that Cheney had another seat for when he attended church 'which is not often he being a Dissenter'.⁸ The outcome is not clear. On the church plan, on the south side of the north aisle, the seat in question can be seen marked 'Richard Wych Cl..' referring to the Wych families 'Clayton's tenement'.

In 1664 Thomas Oakes cited Richard Wrench over a pew dispute.⁹

Today, inside, in the chancel is a two-arched sedilia. The reredos contains an alabaster relief depicting The Last Supper.¹⁰ Monuments are to Mrs France who died in 1814

⁴ Salter, Mark, *The Old Parish Churches of Cheshire*, Folly Publications, (1995), p. 34,

⁵ *Images of England: Table tomb*, English Heritage,
<http://www.imagesofengland.org.uk/details/default.aspx?pid=1&id=57307>,

⁶ *Images of England: Lych gate*, English Heritage,
<http://www.imagesofengland.org.uk/details/default.aspx?pid=1&id=57304>

⁷ Price, James (1998), *Sharpe, Paley and Austin: A Lancaster Architectural Practice 1836–1942*, Lancaster: Centre for North-West Regional Studies, p. 74,

⁸ CRO: EDC5/1688

⁹ CRO: EDC5/1664

¹⁰ *Images of England: Church of St Wilfrid, Davenham*, English Heritage,
<http://www.imagesofengland.org.uk/details/default.aspx?pid=1&id=57305>

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by S. & F. Franceys of Liverpool and to Mrs Harper dated 1833 by Francesco Pozzi of Florence with a relief of a mother and child. In the south aisle is a war memorial by Sir Robert Lorimer. The church plate includes a cup dated 1570 and a stand paten dated 1707.¹¹ The ring consists of six bells. Four of these, dated 1757, two dated 1761 and another 1765 are by Rudhall of Gloucester, and a bell dated 1826 is by Thomas Mears of the Whitechapel Bell Foundry. The sixth bell, which is undated, is by William Noone.¹²

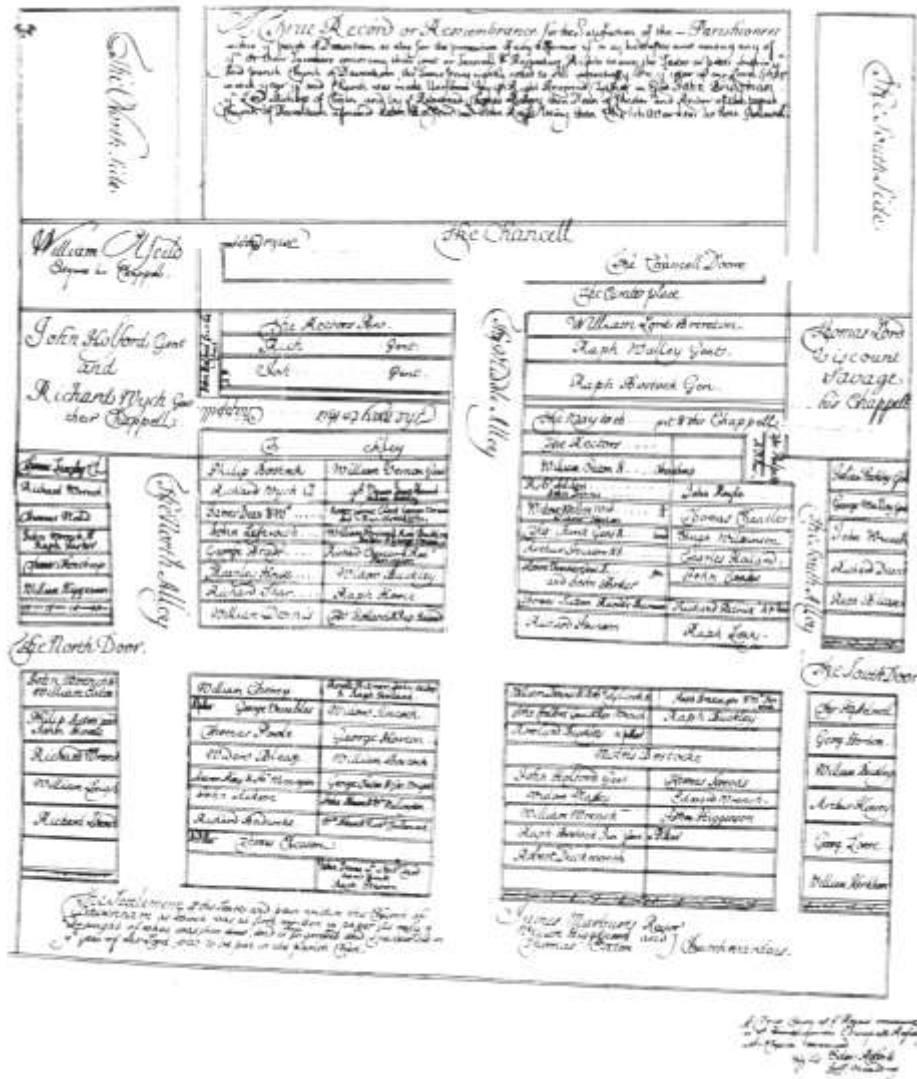


Figure One: Plan of Church Pews, 1635

¹¹ Pevsner, Nikolaus; Edward Hubbard (2003) [1971], *The Buildings of England: Cheshire*, New Haven: Yale University Press, pp. 195–196.

¹² *Davenham S Wilfrid*, Dove's Guide for Church Bell Ringers, <http://dove.ccbbr.org.uk/detail.php?searchString=Davenham&Submit=++Go++&DoveID=DAVENHAM>

The 17th Century Glebe

'Glebe' is land granted to a clergyman as part of his benefice and the church's endowment and on 6 June 1696 an inventory, or 'terrier' as it was called, of the property of the Davenham rectory was undertaken by the incumbent, James Marbury, and two churchwardens: Thomas Hoole of Bostock and John Hall of Leftwich.¹³ Interestingly all the church property lay within the boundaries of Leftwich township. This anomaly seems to have occurred during the latter half of the 13th century when Warin de Vernon, the baron of Shipbrook, died fighting in France. As he had no children at the time of his death the heirs to the family's estates were his three sisters and a couple of cousins. One of these sisters, Maud, married a member of the Wilbraham family and seemingly passed to them her parts of the baronial lands which included the lands in Davenham around the church as well as the manor of Leftwich. Her grandson was Richard Winnington lord of Leftwich, who was still a boy in 1296. Patronage of the church may well have rested with the Wilbrahams and the Winningtons during this time which would have further added to the confusing situation. Patronage eventually passed back to the Vernon family when Ralph de Vernon, Warin's uncle, successfully laid a claim to the Barony of Shipbrook.

This interesting document begins with a description of the minister's house with its outbuildings known as 'The Parsonage Court'. The house comprised of five and half bays; the barn had five large bays; the stable two bays; the cow house had two small bays; there was a swine cote; a hen house; a coal house of two little bays and lastly, but perhaps not least, a 'necessary' house (the privy). The area of land on which the Parsonage property sat, which included an orchard and a garden, measured two and a three-quarter acres and was bounded by the 'cross of Nables' on the east, the 'Elder Acre' and 'Long Meadow' on the south, Royle's House on the west, and the street or lane on the north.

Associated with the Parsonage were some tenements the occupiers of which paid a rent to the rector, these were: 'Finnies Yard' charged at 1s 4d a year; a two-bay house with a small extension at the rear and a barn called 'Holland's House' rented at 8d; 'Royle's House' annually rented at 6s 8d. This last property was substantial and almost as large as the rectory: it had a house of four bays, a barn, stable cow house and hay house within a building of five bays, a swine cote of two bays, a back house, a hen house, a 'necessary house', an orchard, a 'backside', or yard and some small parcels of land. At the time Royle's House was occupied by a Richard Bradford.

Tithes were paid to the church and priest. The lord of Eaton paid forty shillings each Michaelmas in lieu of tithes for the manor; 'Okenthrop-house' paid tithes for its lands; the lord Bulkeley paid 9s for tithes of hay for his lands in Whatcroft and each of his tenants 6d for their houses; Ralph Bradshaw paid a shilling for tithes of hay; Shipbrook, Shurlach, Newall (on Rudheath) paid tithes of hay to Lord Bulkeley; and lastly the manor of Drakelow paid tithes of hay to the rector.

A statement of the ancient customs of the parish as set down on 14 April 1564 was then copied and attested to by the rector and Philip Bostock, William Holland, Thomas Burroughes, Matthew Nikson and George Walker. The record stated that in 1564 the following men - John Holford of Davenham, Richard Wright of Billington, Robert Bostock of Bostock, Richard Dutton of Wharton, Thomas Bulkley of Rudheath, Thomas Burroughs of Wharton, George Walley of Shipbrook, Ralph Walley of Stanthorne and John Worrall of Shurlach - had all sworn that customs had been in force for at least 300 years.

A record of the traditional payments, oblations, made by parishioners was given: for every cows and calf 1½d. was paid on the first six cows and seven calves, thereafter to a maximum

¹³ Cheshire Record Office (CRO): DFN 2705/44; *Cheshire Sheaf*, February 1960, p.15

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of ten 1d was paid for each; 1d was paid for every colt; every tenth fleece; for up to six lambs ½d each, thereafter up to ten 1d; for each hive of bees, 1d; for five quarters of wood, 2d; every tenth sheaf of corn; every tenth cock of hay; every tenth bundle of flax and hemp; there was also an stated charge for each pig and goose. Land was also charged: each ploughland paid 4d. and every cottage plot paid 2d.

It seems that money collected was to be used for times a year in making payments of 2d. to widows. At Easter every child and servant had a ¼d. distributed by the churchwardens who had to deliver their accounts each new years day (then the 25 March) before new wardens were elected. The parishioners also elected a clerk to serve the parish.

Repairs to the church, church styles and churchyard were the responsibility of the parish whereas the lych-gate was at the cost of the lord of Eaton. The rector paid for repairs to the chancel.

The 18th Century Glebe

On 2 July 1789, during the incumbency of George Cotton, another terrier was recorded.¹⁴ This stated that the rectory was a newly built house containing eight rooms and that the outbuildings consisted of an old thatched barn, two stables and a cow house. Ten years earlier when William Brock had been the rector the house was described as being an 'old timber dwelling'. There was an orchard and garden with walks through the shrubberies, in all about 100 roods of land. The churchyard contained about forty roods and was bounded by the road to the south, the lands of Edward Tomkinson of Bostock Hall to the east and north and a narrow lane to the west. The walls and gates to the churchyard were repairable at the expense of the parish with the exception of a gate which was the responsibility of Thomas Cholmondeley of Vale Royal.

In land the church had an acre along the south side of Church Street which adjoined the lands of Thomas Prescott on the east, that of Samuel Barrow to the south and another acre of glebe land to the west. This next field had a lane within it and was separated from the road by a garden which at one time had been part of the field. Next along the lane was another smaller field of about forty roods which was also separated from the road by a garden which was partly glebe land and partly the property of Edward Tomkinson who also owned the field immediately west of this plot. The rector paid 6s 8d to Edward Tomkinson for the garden.

To the rectory belonged all tithes of corn, i.e every eleventh 'shock or sheaf' from the parish, except for Eaton where forty shillings was paid in lieu of all tithes. Tithes of hay was paid by the townships of Leftwich, Moulton and Davenham, whereas Wharton, Bostock and Stanthorne, those farthest away, one shilling for each Cheshire acre¹⁵ for 'upland hay' and two shillings for meadowland. For every 'milch' (milking) cow 1½d. was paid, a barren cow 1d. and for a calf 6s 8d., a coly 1s., a pig 1s 6d., and for geese 6d. each. Every house and garden was charged at 6d.

The townships of Shipbrook, Shurlach, Newall and parts of Rudheath paid a sum of 1s per Cheshire acre for upland hay and 2s for meadowland. The lord of Whatcroft paid 1s for his hall and lands. 'Strongintharm's Farm' paid the rector 1s 6d for hay whereas other tenants paid 6d for their hay.

There were also charges paid to the rector for certain church rites. For 'churching a woman' – 6d; for weddings by means of the proclamation of banns – 1s 6d; a marriage by licence – 5s; every funeral held in the parish cost 5d. where as those outside the parish were charged at 5s

¹⁴ CRO: DFN 2705/44

¹⁵ A Cheshire acre is about 2.1 times larger than a statute acre.

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0d. The parish clerk also received income from these same sources: 2d for a 'churching'; 1s for wedding by banns; 2s 6d for a licensed wedding; 2d and 4d for funerals depending where they occurred, and 4d for every proclamation made by him. The sexton had 4d for every grave dug.

The church was described as being forty yards long and fifteen yards wide with a vestry adjoining the chancel. A description and list of church property then follows:

One Communion Table; one linen cloth and napkin; one pewter flagon; one silver chalice; one silver salver; two copper basins; one chest; one pulpit, with red velvet hanging and a cushion; one large bible; four Common Prayer books; the 'Kings Arms with the Ten Commandments; one clock; six bells; two biers; one black cloth; one hearse; one blk cloak; two surplices; and three register books.

The witnesses to the terrier were: John Brayshaw, the curate; William Okell and Thomas Jackson, churchwardens; Edward Tomkinson, Thomas Highlord Ravenscroft, Ephariam Allan, John Royle, Abel Trim, George Darlington, Samuel Butter, Isaac Blackey, John Wright, John Lightfoot and George Earl, who were the important people of the parish.

The 19th Century Glebe

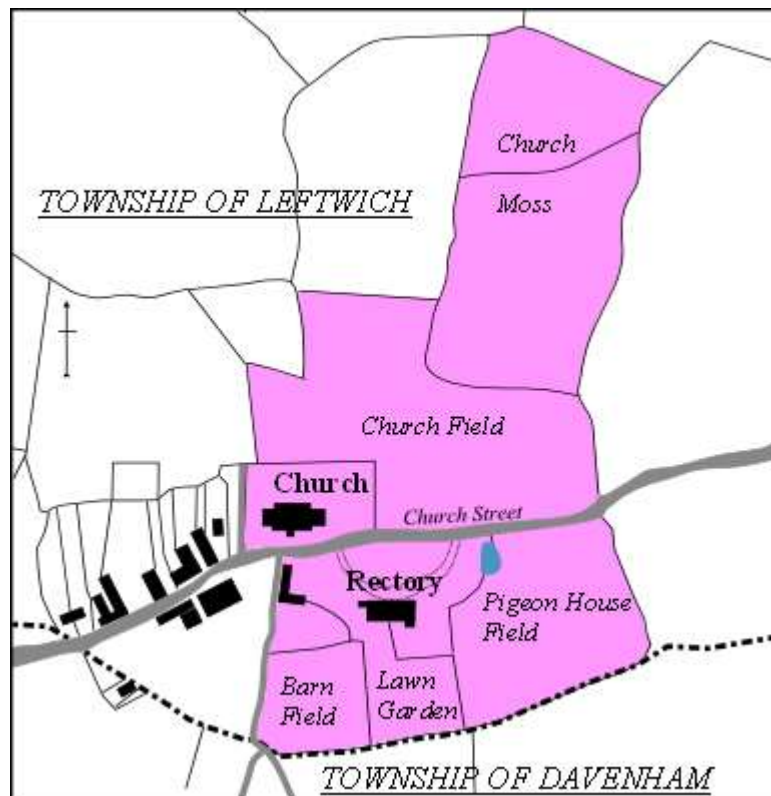


Figure Two: 19th Century Glebe

The church property is clearly marked on the tithe map drawn up in the late 1830s.¹⁶ This shows a number of plots of land under the ownership and occupation of the rector, Reverend Thomas France. It is noticeable that by this time Church Moss and Church Field had been added to the glebe and that the land along the south side of Church Street had been reduced.

¹⁶ CRO: P6/15

**APPENDIX ONE:
RECTORS OF DAVENHAM**

(From Ormerod's History of Cheshire, vol. III, pp 240-1)

<i>Date of induction</i>	<i>Priests</i>	<i>Patrons</i>
c.1190	Ralph de Vernon	Sir Ralph de Vernon ¹⁷
Pre1314	Robert de Redeswell	Sir Ralph de Vernon
1315	Richard de Vernon	Sir Ralph de Vernon
1317	Thomas de Vernon	Agnes, wid. of Sir Ralph de Vernon
1330	Ralph de Breerton	Roger de Trumpington
1347	Hugh de Hopwas	Roger de Trumpington
1349	Robert de Freford	Roger de Trumpington
1351	John de Assheton	Roger de Trumpington
1353	Robert del Cross	Roger de Trumpington
1353	John de Assheton	Roger de Trumpington
1363	Walter Dammory	Roger de Trumpington
1380	Thomas de Horton	Sir Ralph de Vernon
1384	Bathus de Legh	Sir Ralph de Vernon
1390	John de Akedon	Sir Ralph de Vernon
1390	William de Legh	Sir Ralph de Vernon
1405	Hugh de Faringdon	Sir Hugh Hulse
1418	Andrew Hulse	Elizabeth, wid.of Sir Ralph de Vernon
1435	Oliver de Legh	Sir John Savage
1470	Thomas Savage	Sir John Savage
1486	William Wall	Sir John Savage
1511	Roger (or George) Savage	Sir John Savage
1540	Edmund Savage (alias Boner)*	Sir John Savage
Pre 1540	John Savage	The King
1546	Simon Shephard	The King
1569	John Whatton	Sir John Savage
Pre 1580	Thomas Hevelt	
1601	Thomas Mallory	
Pre1612	Simon Savage	
1662	James Marbury	
1678	Robert Ridgeway	Mary Broadhurst
1681	James Marbury	Thomas lord Rivers, Viscount Savage
1682	James Arderne, S.T.P.	The King
Pre 1686	James Marbury	
1725	Thomas Derbyshire	
1745	Ashburnham Legh, A.M.	Edward Vawdrey, esq
1775	William Brock	Thomas Brock, esq.
1787	George Cotton, LL.D	Edward Tomkinson, esq.
1797	James Tomkinson, A.B.	Henry Tomkinson, esq.
1820	James Tomkinson, LL.B	Henry Tomkinson, esq.
1822?	Henry Tomkinson, LL.B	Trustees of Henry Tomkinson
1838	Rowland Egerton-Warburton, M.A.	James France France, esq.
1839	Thomas France	James France France

¹⁷ During the twelfth century with the death of Warin de Vernon the succession may have passed to the Wilbrahams and their descendants the Winningtons and Leftwichs who were lords of Leftwich manor. They then may have granted the advowson to Birkenhead Priory whose rights were successfully challenged by Ralph de Vernon, Warin's uncle, who had also succeeded in recovering his right to the Barony of Shipbrook in the 1290s.

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*Edmund Savage afterwards became Bishop of London.

APPENDIX TWO: ENGLISH HERITAGE DESCRIPTIONS

From English Heritage's National Monuments Record, *Images of England*. No. 57305

DAVENHAM. Church of St Wilfred. 3.1.67 G.V. II* Church. 1844-1870. Edmund Sharpe (probably in conjunction with E.G.Paley). Red sandstone ashlar with slate roof. Gothic. West tower. Nave with aisles and transepts. Chancel. South western porch and North eastern vestry. South eastern chantry chapel. Tower (of 1844): western front has angle buttresses and moulded plinth. Central double doors in pointed arch with moulded surround and hood mould with figurehead label stops and keystone with winged angel in high relief. String course above rising to accommodate arch. Further string course above immediately below sill of four-light traceried window with cusped lights and 3 quatrefoils. Later circular painted clock face above this with string courses above and below. Two-light louvred traceried belfry opening above. Plain parapet above this with two animal gargoyles. Octagonal spire above set back with three tiers of lucarnes to the North, South, East and West faces. South face has a semi-octagonal staircase turret at left in place of angle buttress. Store room before lower stage having two 2-light cusped windows with trefoils at apexes, hood moulds with label stops, gables above wrought-iron open clock face set over window with shallow 2-centred arch and flamboyant tracery. Two-light belfry opening and parapet with gargoyles as at west. North face. Lean-to outshut to lower wall with double door at left and single door to right. Shallow-arched window above with flamboyant tracery as to south face although without clock face. Belfry opening, parapet and gargoyles as on other fronts. Nave: South face, 5 bays with gabled later C19 porch at left having moulded arch and hood mould with label stops. Two-light unglazed windows to side walls of porch, cusped and with trefoils to apexes. To right of the porch are two aisle windows each of 3 cusped lights with cusped trefoils above and with buttresses between. Transept to right of this with two similar windows with buttress between and rose window to gable with glass at summit. Two-light windows to right and left hand transept reveals. Clerestory windows each of two lights with trefoils over and plain parapet with moulded chamfered coping. North front is similar save for absence of porch. Chancel: South front: three bays of 3-light traceried windows. Its right hand (eastern) return has a door and two-light traceried window. Three and 2-light chancel windows to left and right respectively with buttresses between and at angles North face similar save for vestry in re-entrant angle between chancel and transept being of two heights. Two-light northern window with gable over. Eastern front: left hand earlier portion has 2-light window at left at mezzanine level with door to right and 2-flue chimney stack to right hand gable. Lower portion flush with this to right and having two-light window. East end: five-light traceried window to centre with cusped lights, hood mould and label stops. Cross to apex. Interior: Vaulted ceiling to tower which has three deeply chamfered reveals and is uninterrupted from its base to apex. Nave arcade of hexagonal shafts with moulded bases and capitals. Ovolo mouldings to arches with fillet to centre of intrados. Hood moulds over with shared label stops carved as angels bearing musical instruments or praying. Clerestory windows have pillars to sides. Nave roof trusses of alternating arched braces and trusses formed of arched braces rising to a thin, turned tie beam supporting further arched braces. Boarded roof beyond. The transepts have similar roofs. Moulded chancel arch with colonettes and moulded vine-trail decoration. Two arched sedilia to Eastern end of right hand wall connecting with blind arcade to Eastern wall of 6 arches, three to either side of the projecting reredos which contains an alabaster relief of the Last Supper. Boarded ceiling. Stained glass of c.1870. War memorial in South nave aisle by Sir Robert Lorimer of C.1919 has tall spiral-moulded wooden corner posts carrying figures of praying angels. Low Screens dividing the memorial from the aisle seating with linen-fold moulding and open vine-trail moulding to top. Alabaster tablet to southern wall inscribed with the names of the dead below which are six panels, the central two glazed and containing a book of remembrance, the two on either side holding relief carvings of figures of COURAGE, GENTLENESS, CHARITY and JUSTICE under

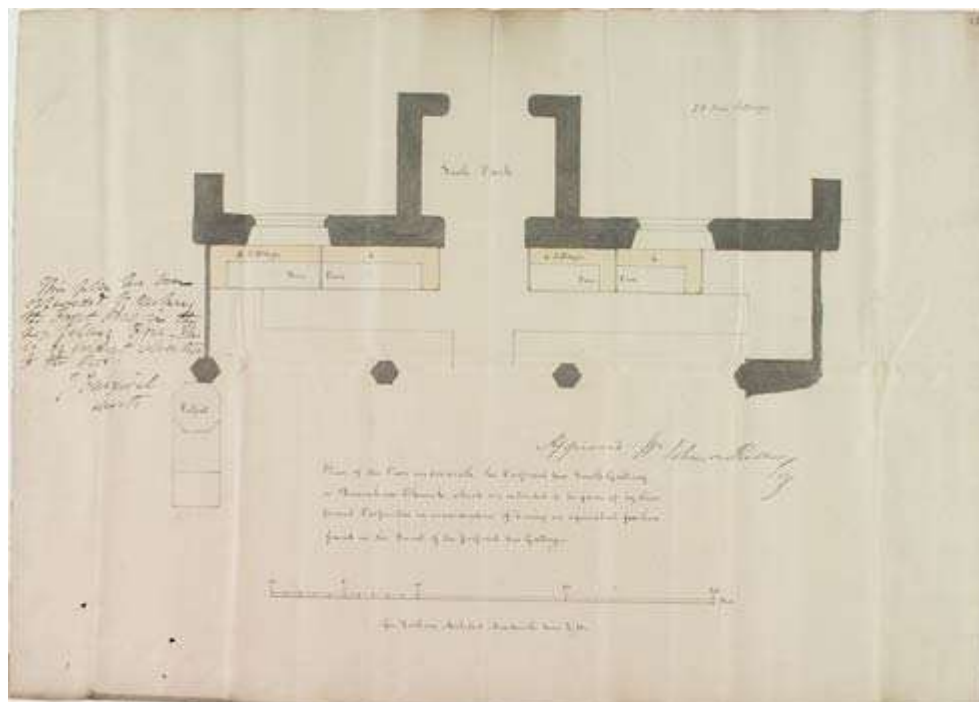
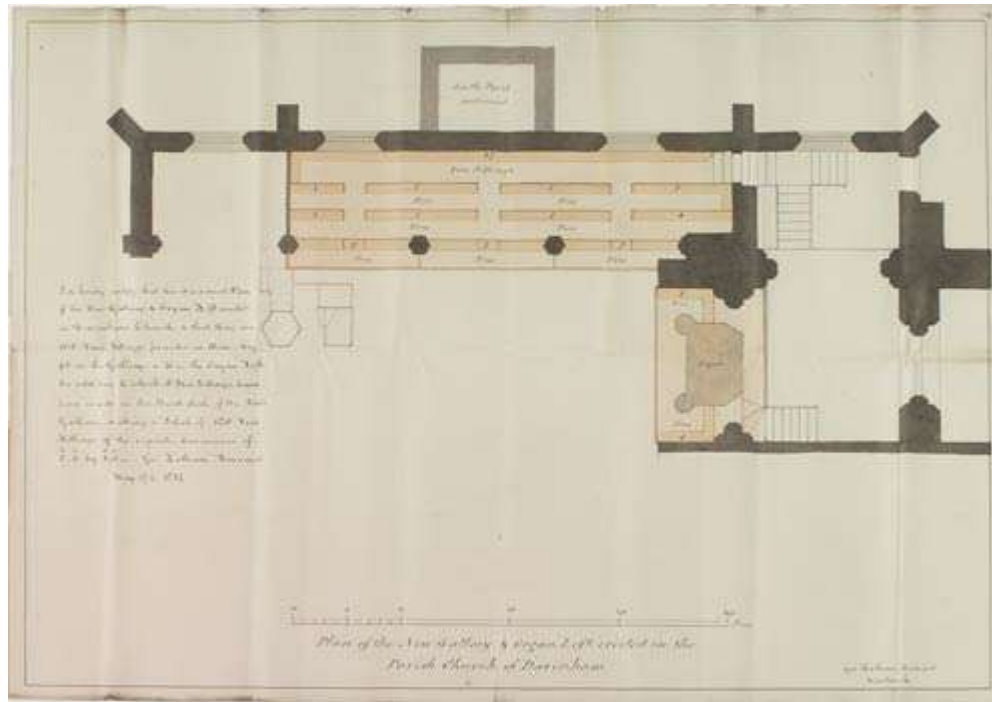
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moulded ogee canopies. Source: Nikolaus Pevsner and Edward Hubbard - The Buildings of England, Cheshire.

I of E No. 57307. Table tomb c.15 yards east of Church of St Wilfred - G.V. II Table tomb. c.1808. To William Worthington of Leftwich, merchant, d.1808 and others of his family. Yellow sandstone ashlar base with marble sides and sandstone top. Rectangular tomb and encased sides. Sides have lateral pilaster strips with acroteria and trail of foliage in relief. Central panels have oval paterae with surrounding rinceau. Panel to head of tomb has urn with cover and flame finial surrounded by boughs of oak leaves bound at base by ribbon and panel at foot has round patera surrounded by boughs of laurel all in relief.

I of E No. 57304. Lych gate in Churchyard of St Wilfred - G.V. II Lych gate. Late C19. Red sandstone ashlar with timber superstructure and plain tile roof. Road Front: Ashlar plinth with chamfered top. Lateral posts above this with bead moulding to inner edges, four centred arch over with continuation of bead mould. Inscription to arch bressumer reading GRANT O LORD THAT THROUGH THE GRAVE/AND GATES OF DEATH/WE MAY PASS TO OUR JOYFUL RESURRECTION. Brattished band above and decorated open framing to gable. Moulded bargeboards to either side. Left and right hand reveals each have three square posts with ramped lower buttressing pieces. Arched braces between. This item is included for group value with church.

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