

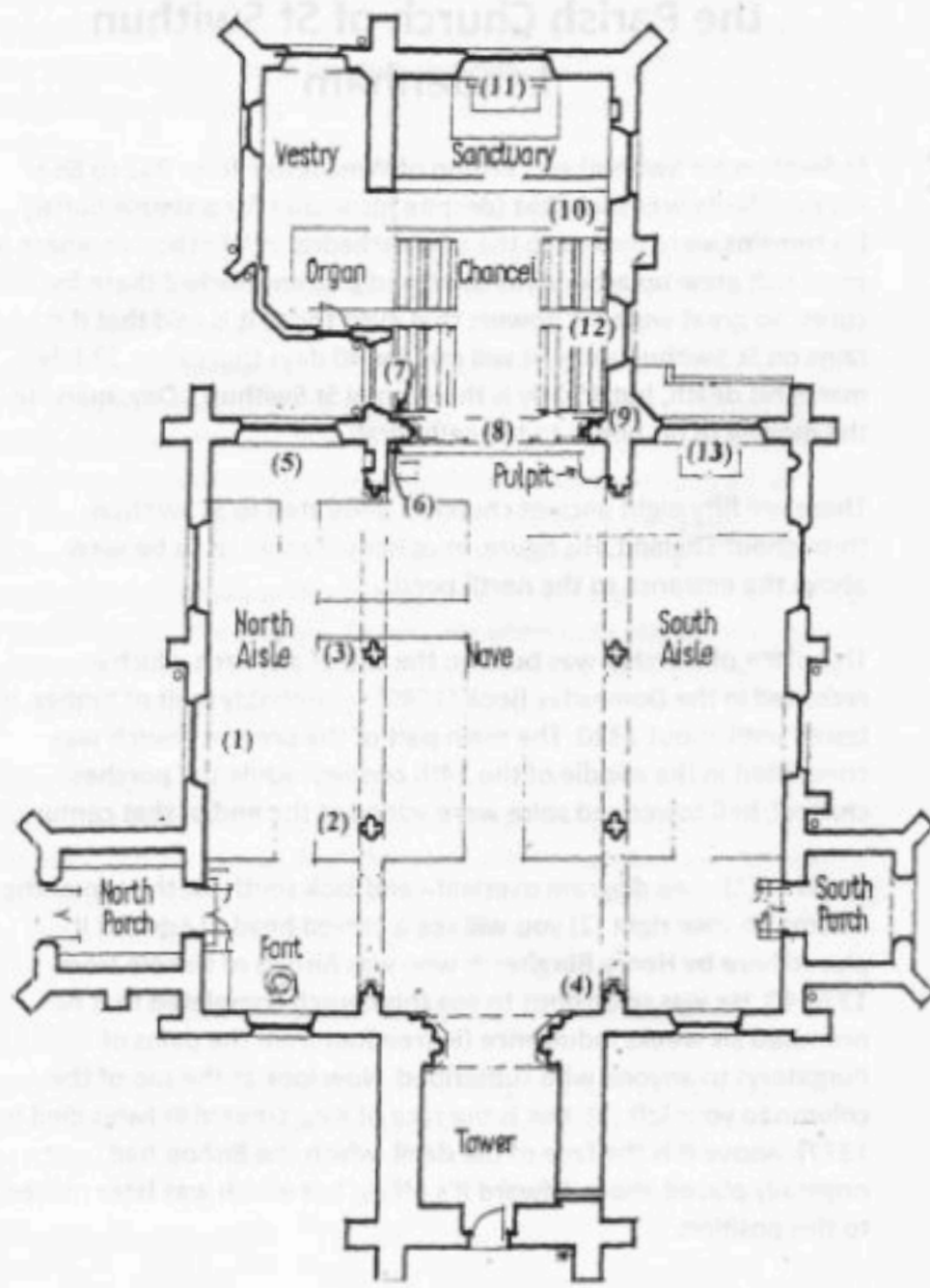
A Short Guide to the Parish Church of St Swithun Leadenham

St Swithun (or Swithin) was Bishop of Winchester from 852 to 862. His popularity was such that (despite his wishes for a simple burial) his remains were moved to the new cathedral at Winchester where a great cult grew up around his tomb and pilgrims flocked there for cures. So great were his powers that even today it is said that if it rains on St Swithun's day, it will rain for 40 days thereafter. [2 July marks his death, but 15 July is the normal St Swithun's Day, marking the moving of his bones to the cathedral].

There are fifty eight ancient churches dedicated to St Swithun throughout England. His figure, in episcopal robes, is to be seen above the entrance to the north porch.

This place of worship was built on the site of a church which is recorded in the Domesday Book (1086) — probably built of timber. It lasted until about 1320. The main part of the present church was completed in the middle of the 14th century, while the porches, chancel, bell tower and spire were added at the end of that century.

Stand at (1) - see diagram overleaf - and look south. At the top of the column to your right (2) you will see a carved head of Edward II - placed here by Henry Burghersh who was Bishop of Lincoln from 1320-40. He was so anxious to see this church completed that he promised six weeks indulgence (ie freedom from the pains of Purgatory) to anyone who subscribed. Now look at the top of the column to your left (3): this is the face of King Edward III (who died in 1377). Above it is the face of the devil, which the Bishop had originally placed above Edward II's effigy, but which was later moved to this position.



A Short Guide to
 the Parish Church of St. Andrew

Walk to (4) - the list of rectors of this parish includes James Mallet (executed by Henry VIII for protesting against the dissolution of the monasteries); John Dee (scientist and astrologer at the court of Elizabeth I); Thomas Hurst (Chaplain to Charles I during the civil war and the early Victorian rector Bernard Smith, who was responsible for the decorations in the chancel.

Go to (5) at the top of the north aisle. Here in the middle ages there was an altar where masses could be said for the dead. The piscine (Latin for basin) in the wall on your right was where the sacred vessels were cleansed after mass. There is a similar one at the top of the south aisle. Just behind the lectern (6) you can switch on the light which illuminates the cross hanging above the rood screen (8). The rood (or cross) was often in this position in medieval churches. This screen and the hanging cross were introduced in the late 19th century. If you look to the right of the suspended cross you will see (9) high above the pulpit a door which was the access to a rood loft, where in medieval times mimes could be presented, or the deed-roll read out. Like most medieval lofts this and the screen were removed at the reformation. You can sit in the Rector's stall (7), and contemplate the Pugin ceiling - see the separate information sheet. New lighting will eventually be installed to show it off to best effect.

On the floor at (10) you will see a charming little brass, a memorial to a wife (died 1624) of the Beresford family, who were Lords of the Manor at that time. Other monuments to them, and to the Reeve family (subsequent Lords of the Manor) may be found throughout the church. The Reeve family still lives at Leadenham House. The touching window above is in memory of the daughter of Thomas Brown, Rector. The altar (11) is backed by a Puginesque mosaic of late 19th century creation. Above it there is the large east window which consists - in the top three panels - of early 16th century Flemish glass brought here in 1827 by the then Rector, Thomas Brown (uncle of Bernard Smith). They depict God in heaven, with yellow rays of light spreading to angelic heads and clouds in the panels below. The rest of the window, which shows scenes from the life of the Virgin, was made by Hardman of Birmingham - John Hardman, its founder, made stained glass for Pugin. This window was donated in 1880 by Bernard Smith (by then the

Roman Catholic priest in Marlow, Bucks) in memory of his mother, and of his brother Offley, who had succeeded him as Rector here. The window (12) on the south side of the chancel depicts Jesus as the Good Shepherd (Pastor Bonus) flanked by St Swithun (holding the Gospels) and St Hugh (holding Lincoln Cathedral) — bearing their crosiers (crooks) as shepherds of their flock.

Go to the top of the south aisle; the altar (13) is in fact an old medieval mensa (table, or altar top) which had been found by Thomas Brown in the churchyard (where it had been dumped when the 16th century reformers swept away such 'Roman' artefacts). Brown used it as the main altar, and his nephew Bernard inserted into it (under the diamond shaped area in the centre) what he believed to be a bone of St Bernard, given to him by Ambrose de Lisle (of Grace Dieu in Leicestershire) whom he had met through Pugin. Traditionally, Roman Catholic altars have such a relic in them. The altar was again thrown out when Bishop Kaye of Lincoln ordered Smith to remove all the 'Romish' objects from the church. It was brought in again and placed here in the mid-twentieth century. To the right of the altar is another piscine, where flowers are often now placed. The flags, poppy Wreath and wall tablet are in memory of the local men who served and died in the forces, especially in World War I.

This area of the church is our 'prayer corner' - a place for people to be quiet, or to say their own prayers. Some prayers and readings are available on the prie-Dieu (or prayer desk) for your use. Remember your families and friends including those who have died; pray for the witness of this church to the truth that is in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Please remember to sign our visitors' book

If you would like to leave a gift for the upkeep of this church, please place it in the wall safe to the right of the door by which you entered.