

WELCOME SPACE

Changes to St John the Baptist Church, Holywell-cum-Needingworth

TIMELINE OF THE CHURCH

The church before the 19th century

Before the Norman conquest

- ❖ There has been a church on this site since Anglo-Saxon times. It was mentioned in a charter of 969 AD. This would probably have been a simple wooden building. The site is the highest point in Holywell, and directly above the spring (now the Holy Well in the churchyard), which was almost certainly a pre-Christian sacred site, and so the area would already have been a focus for worship at the time Christianity was introduced.

The Middle Ages

- ❖ The oldest part of the present church – the chancel – dates from the 12th century. This part of the church would have been the entire building at the time.
- ❖ The nave, the main body of the church, was added in 13th century. The aisles were built on later, at different times – the north one dates from the 13th century, and the south one from the early 14th century.
- ❖ The pillars of the font also date from the 13th century, but the basin above them is modern.

The Tudor period and beyond

- ❖ The tower was added in the 16th century. When Henry VIII dissolved England's monasteries, parts of their buildings were often sold off as materials for other building work. In our case, the churchwardens bought the tower from the remains of Ramsey Abbey and re-erected it here. The components of it are probably not all from the same tower at Ramsey, but more of a 'pick and mix' of parts of the Abbey. All the pieces would have been brought down the Ouse by boat.
- ❖ The first four bells were installed in 1625 (and are still in use)
- ❖ We don't know what the seating arrangements were. Probably none in the medieval period, but from Tudor times onwards there were probably some seats or pews.

Changes to the medieval church

- 1862** The interior of the church was modernised. This is when the current pews were installed, shown clearly on the 1862 plan. Note the side-facing pews at the end of each aisle. The stonework of the main east window was repaired, and the present vestry and church porch were added to the building.
- 1891** The organ was installed as a thanksgiving from the Rector at the time.
- 1915** The bells were rehung and a fifth one added.
- 1919** Vestry repaired.
- 1922** The present altar was installed, along with the oak panel behind it (the reredos). The previous altar table was transferred to the new war memorial panel in the south aisle.
- 1923** The oak screen dividing the nave from the chancel was installed by the Rector, Revd James Ross. There would have been a similar screen in the medieval church, but it had been removed at an earlier date.
- 1931** The stained glass of the East Window was inserted. At this time the side-facing pews in the aisles were removed.
- 1947** The sixth (treble) bell was added.
- 2005** The new boiler was installed in the vestry. The radiators which it serves are of pre-war vintage.
- 2007** The church roof was completely replaced.
- 2011** The armorial window (above the memorial altar) was restored and re-leaded.