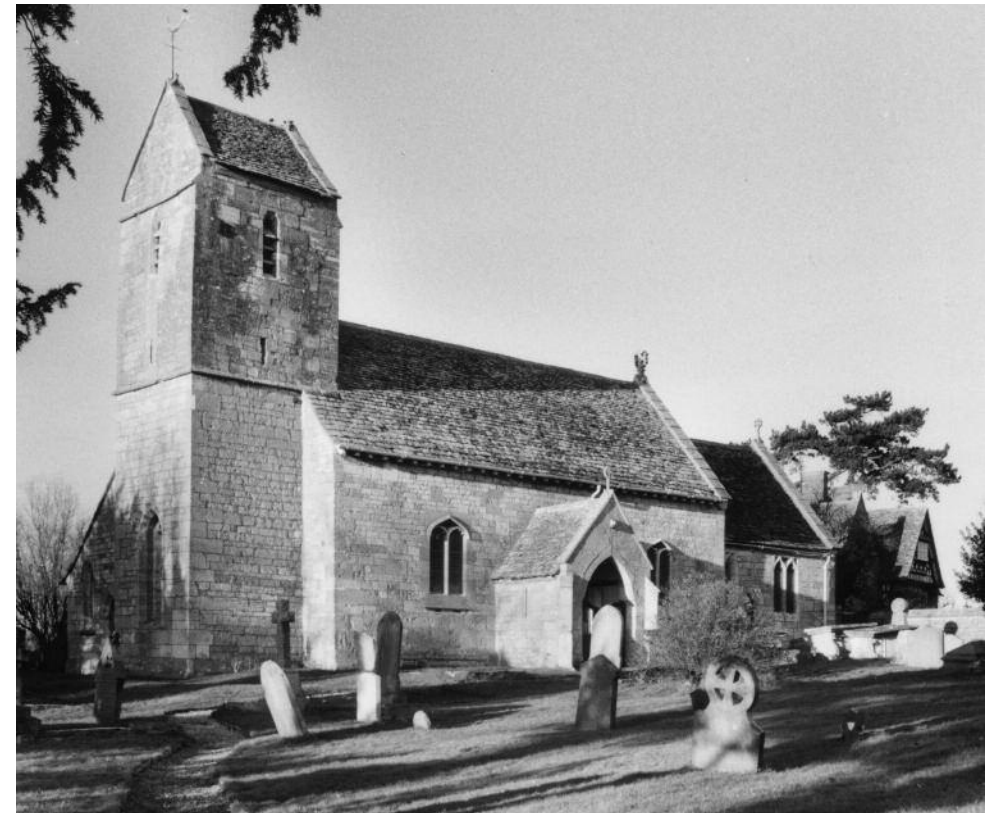




ST SWITHIN'S CHURCH

BROOKTHORPE
GLOUCESTERSHIRE



THE CHURCHES CONSERVATION TRUST

89 Fleet Street · London EC4Y 1DH

Registered Charity No. 258612

PRICE: £1.00



THE CHURCHES CONSERVATION
TRUST WELCOMES YOU TO
ST SWITHIN'S CHURCH
BROOKTHORPE, GLOUCESTERSHIRE

Many years ago Christians built and set apart this place for prayer. They made their church beautiful with their skill and craftsmanship. Here they have met for worship, for children to be baptised, for couples to be married and for the dead to be brought for burial. If you have time, enjoy the history, the peace and the holiness here. Please use the prayer card and, if you like it, you are welcome to take a folded copy with you.

Although services are no longer regularly held here, this church remains consecrated; inspiring, teaching and ministering through its beauty and atmosphere. It is one of more than 320 churches throughout England cared for by The Churches Conservation Trust. The Trust was created in 1969 and was, until 1994, known as the Redundant Churches Fund. Its object is to ensure that all these churches are kept in repair and cared for, in the interests of the Church and Nation, for present and future generations.

Please help us to care for this church. There is a box for donations or, if you prefer to send a gift, it will be gratefully received at the Trust's headquarters at 89 Fleet Street, London EC4Y 1DH (Registered Charity No. 258612).

We hope that you will enjoy your visit and be encouraged to see our other churches. Some are in towns; some in remote country districts. Some are easy and others hard to find but all are worth the effort.

Nearby are the Trust churches of:

GLOUCESTER, ST NICHOLAS
Westgate Street, city centre

LASSINGTON, ST OSWALD (TOWER)
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ST SWITHIN'S CHURCH

BROOKTHORPE, GLOUCESTERSHIRE

by ANDREW PIKE

HISTORY

Brookthorpe is first recorded in the Domesday Book of 1086. Many 'thorpe' names indicate a Danish settlement, particularly in northern Britain, but here 'thorp' is an old English word meaning 'an outlying farmstead'. So we have an outlying farmstead near the brook – the brook being one of the various streams which flow through the parish from their sources in the hills around Edge on their way to join the Severn in and around Gloucester.

At the time of the Domesday Book, Brookthorpe ('Brostorp') was held by King William and let to Roger de Ivry. For some reason, now long forgotten, King Harold had, before the Norman Conquest, confiscated the manor from its previous owner Aelfric.

The church is first mentioned about 1100 when it was recorded as having been given by Adelisa, Roger de Ivry's wife, to the monastery of St Peter, Gloucester. Until its dissolution in 1540 St Peter's maintained close links with Brookthorpe. Afterwards the monastery became the centre of a new diocese, with the abbey church forming Gloucester Cathedral: the right to appoint vicars then passed to the cathedral's Dean and Chapter.

DESCRIPTION

St Swithin's church consists of a chancel, nave, north aisle, vestry, west tower and south porch. Much of the existing fabric is of 13th century date. It is built of limestone with roofs of Cotswold stone slates.

The west tower, of two stages, has a saddleback roof with a weathercock on the western gable.

The nave is lit by two two-light windows on the south side. Until the north aisle was added in 1892, the only window in the north wall was the single lancet window, still in situ in the undisturbed section of the wall near the stairs to the rood-loft. The chancel has a single lancet window in its east wall, two windows in its south wall together with a small priest's door, and a pair of lancet windows in its north wall.



Chronogram in south porch

(CHRISTOPHER DALTON)

The north wall of the north aisle has two three-light dormer windows of 1892 and a small lancet window in the east wall. The north-west vestry, also added in 1892, has a small window in its north wall and a window and external door in its west wall.

The church is entered through the south porch, which appears to be contemporary with the nave. The timber wall-plate on the west side is inscribed with a chronogram, in which some of the letters correspond to Roman numerals. The inscription reads:

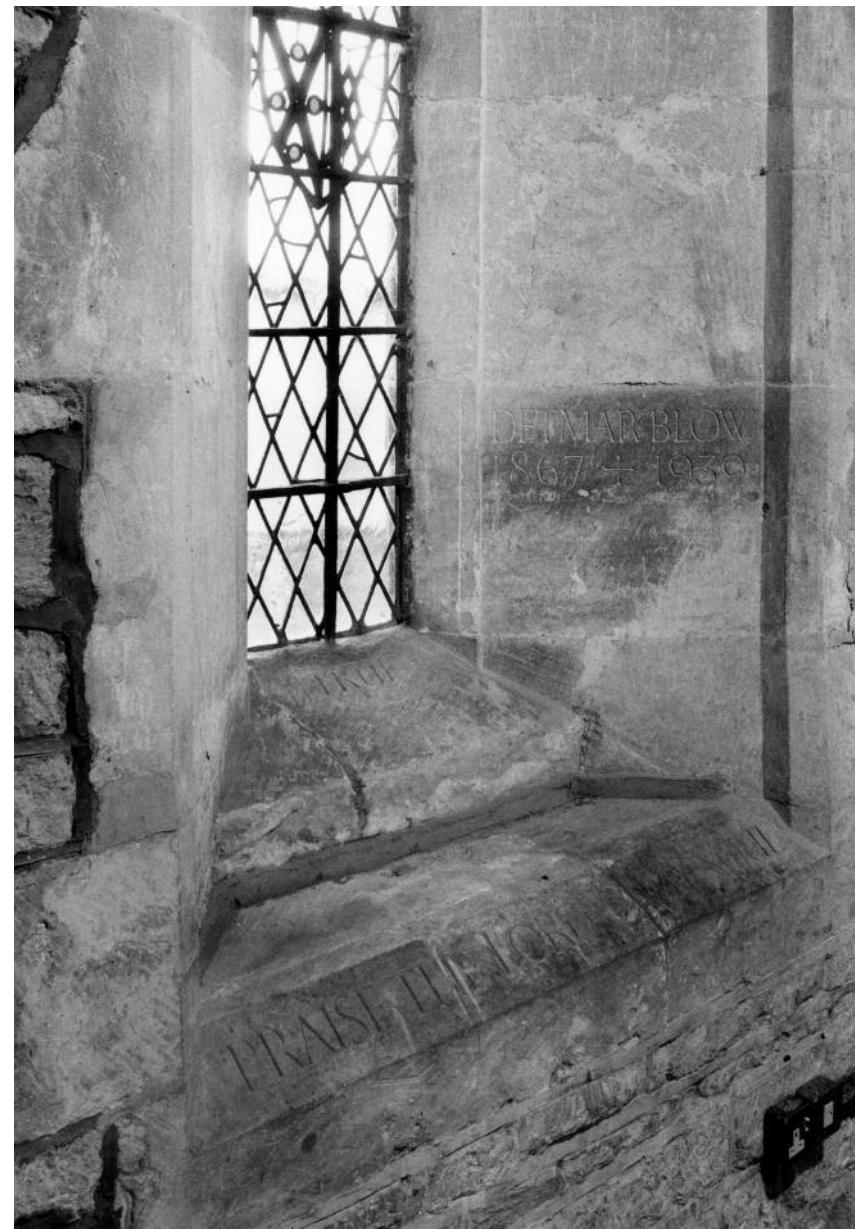
Ter Deno IanI Labens reX soLe CaDente
CaroLVs eXVtVs soLlo sCeptroqVe CVre

translated as 'In the afternoon of January 30 the falling king was bereft of throne and sceptre by the axe'; a more poetic rendition was provided by a former vicar's father, the Revd F T Bayly:

On Thirtieth January's setting sun
The axe on Royal Charles its work had done –
His throne and sceptre lost – his short race run.

The capital letters used as Roman numerals add up to 1648, the year in which (according to the old calendar) King Charles I was beheaded. The inscription is said to have been carved on the orders of Rowland Wood, lord of the manor and a Royalist. The wall-plate on the east side contains various graffiti including one of Nathaniel Haynes, 1670.

The nave roof dates from the 19th century and is of 'queen-post' construction. Some of the walls were stripped of plaster in the mid-19th century; this revealed two doorways and the stairs to the rood-loft in the north-east angle of the nave with the chancel. In the east wall of the nave,



Inscription by Eric Gill to Detmar Blow on north nave window

(CHRISTOPHER DALTON)



Font and ground floor of tower, looking west

(CHRISTOPHER DALTON)

behind the pulpit, is a pointed blind window or recess. An arcade of two wide arches, resting on a large cylindrical pillar, leads into the north aisle. A tall pointed arch gives access to the ground floor of the tower. Above it, but off-centre, is a small door leading into the upper stages of the tower.

The semicircular chancel arch is of 13th century date. The chancel roof is possibly of 17th century date, although many of the timbers have been renewed. The chancel floor is paved with 19th century tiles of different colours, together with stone quarries. Within the sanctuary the floor tiles are patterned. The reredos consists of a blind arcade of seven arches, painted white and probably of 13th century date but much restored. On the north wall of the sanctuary is a credence, probably of 19th century date but designed to match the trefoiled arches of the reredos.

The vestry, of 1892, has a very small piscina in the sill of its west window.

Three of the windows contain stained glass: the east chancel window depicts Christ the Good Shepherd and is of about 1885; it was given in memory of F T Bayly, vicar 1839–83. The easternmost south chancel window depicts The Deposition and the Ascension; possibly by William Warrington it was given in memory of Thomas Carter (d.1847). The easternmost of the nave windows on the south side shows St Swithin and St Margaret of Scotland. It was made by Heaton, Butler & Bayne and commemorates Stuart Routledge Majendie (d.1894), who was responsible for the restoration and enlargement of the church in 1892, and his wife (d.1896).

The altar is an oak table of 18th century date; the communion rails, also oak, date from the 1892 restoration.

The hexagonal pulpit is of pine and is probably of mid-18th century date.

There are two lecterns: one, a two-sided revolving oak desk, was made in 1955; the other is a small, single-sided desk mounted on an octagonal pedestal and is late-19th century.

A new font was amongst the items to be provided in the 1892 restoration. But it would seem that, in the event, the old font of 17th or 18th century date was recut and reshaped. It has a plain oak cover.

Amongst the furnishings the chair, probably of 17th century date, in the chancel and the oak chest in the north aisle of 18th century date should be noted. The choir stalls, now removed to the west end of the nave, are late-19th century. The brass chandelier in the chancel is probably of 18th century date.

There are a number of monuments in the church. The more elaborate are those in the tower: on the south wall is one to George Venn 'minister of this parish about fifty years' (d.1694) and his wife Anne (d.1693). The black inscription is set within an elaborate cartouche adorned with flowers,

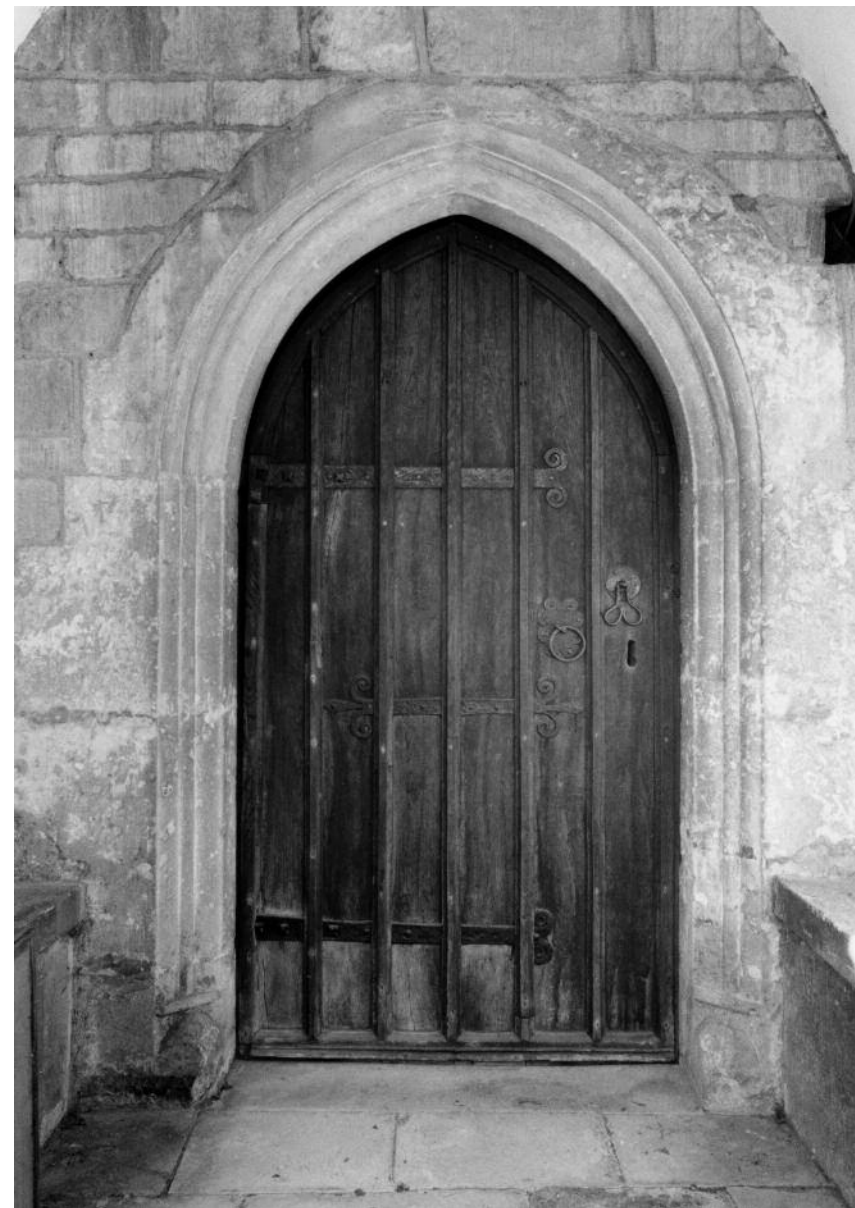
palms, drapery and two heads. On the south wall is a tablet commemorating Thomas Smith (d.1753) and his wife (d.1801) with a pediment and cherub's head and drapery. Another Thomas Smith (of Bacchus, an outlying farm), d.1828, is commemorated on the north wall. A small brass tablet on the sill of the west window commemorates Sarah Collier (d.1783). Under the north chancel window is a brass tablet to Richard Wood, d.1598. a brass tablet on the sill of the east chancel window records Francis Turnour Bayly, vicar for 44 years (d.1883) and the donation of the stained glass window above. Carved into the reveal and sill of the small north nave window is a memorial inscription to Detmar Blow, the architect (1867–1939), by Eric Gill. Blow's shield of arms is depicted in the glass of the window above. Detmar Blow was churchwarden of St Swithin's from 1918 to 1932 and lived nearby at the house called Hilles, which he designed himself.

The memorial to those killed in the First World War has, somewhat unusually, been carved into the masonry of the central pillar of the north arcade. The lettering is of high quality although, unfortunately, the stonework has been affected by damp. Above are two contemporary army helmets, a British Legion banner and the Union Flag.

The tower contains two bells. The smaller was probably made by John of Gloucester after the middle of the 14th century; it is inscribed '+ Eternis. Annis. Resonet. Campana. Ioannis'. The larger is by Abraham Rudhall I of Gloucester and is inscribed 'Glory to God on High. A:R.1711'. They were rehung in a metal frame by Llewellyns & James of Bristol in 1913, as a brass plate on the north wall of the ground floor of the tower records. There was formerly a clock with a face on the south side of the tower which appears to have been removed soon after 1892.

Until the 1892 restoration there was a west gallery. Wall paintings were said to be visible and included the Lord's Prayer and the Ten Commandments in black and red borders. During repair work in the early Victorian period, mediaeval glazed and decorated tiles were found. Some were set in the sill of the south nave window west of the main door and depict the emblems of the Lord's Passion, with a cross and inscription.

There was formerly a fine 18th century pipe organ, with contemporary case, by the London organ builder John Snetzler. This was situated at the east end of the north aisle. It was built in 1768 and for many years was in the possession of the Wilde family of Sulham Manor, Berkshire. They gave it to a church in Tilehurst, near Reading, in 1932; in 1939 it was acquired by Brookthorpe church. It was transferred to the neighbouring church of St Margaret, Whaddon, in 1997.



South door from south porch

(CHRISTOPHER DALTON)

LATER HISTORY

The registers record the existence of a library in the 18th century. In 1844 it is recorded that the parish clerk received an increase in salary as a result of 'better observance of fasts and festivals of the church and the surplice required to be oftener washed in consequence of more frequent communions'. As mentioned above, the church underwent a major restoration and enlargement in 1891–92, the architect being Sidney Gambier-Parry. The cost was £1200. Poor drainage and subsidence had long caused problems and various measures to deal with them were undertaken at various times in the 20th century. But the rising costs of repairs and a declining congregation led to a decision to declare the church redundant. The effective bisection of the village by the M5 motorway cannot have helped matters. The church was duly made redundant and vested in The Churches Conservation Trust in December 1997. Shortly afterwards the Trust initiated a programme of repairs under the direction of Nigel Hammett of Norman Machin Associates, architects, of Oxfordshire.

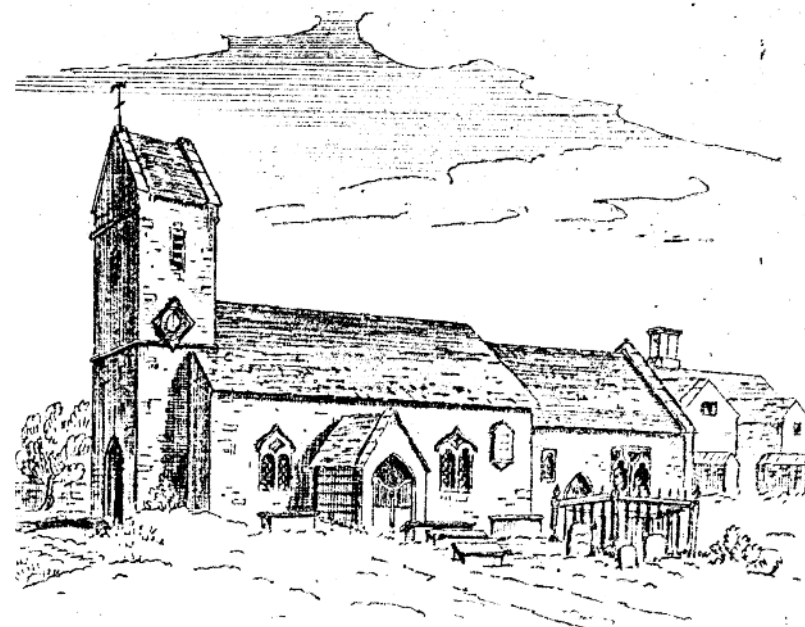
The churchyard contains some good quality tomb-chests of Cotswold stone, mainly of the 17th century, and also a large monument in polished pink marble to Major-General William de Wilton Roche-Thackwell (d.1910). A simpler, yet equally heartfelt, memorial commemorates Jack, his beloved dog, who lies buried just outside the churchyard perimeter fence.

The former vicarage to the south of the churchyard was built in 1846 by T H Wyatt and D Brandon. The earlier parsonage, mentioned in terriers of 1679 and 1731, was apparently situated on the edge of the parish near Harescombe. The living was combined with neighbouring Whaddon in 1843. In later years it was combined with Edge, Pitchcombe and Harescombe.

The parish registers date from 1569 and are deposited in the Gloucestershire Records Office, Gloucester.

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Above: Drawing from *Etchings & Views in the County of Gloucester* (S LYSONS).

Front cover: Exterior from the south-west (CHRISTOPHER DALTON).

Back cover: Interior looking east (CHRISTOPHER DALTON).

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Series 4 no. 136

August 1999