

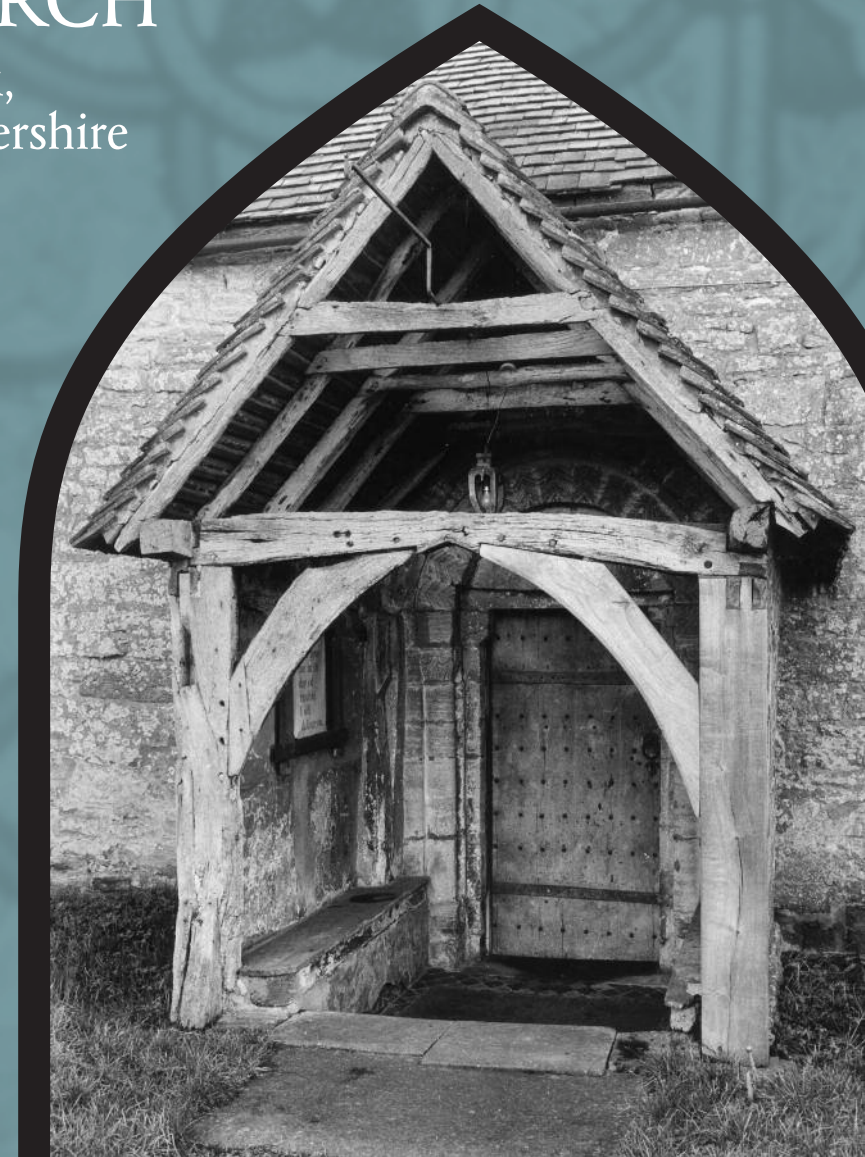


THE CHURCHES
CONSERVATION TRUST



PENDOCK OLD CHURCH

Pendock,
Worcestershire



THE CHURCHES
CONSERVATION TRUST

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Pendock, Worcestershire

PENDOCK OLD CHURCH

by Robert Philipson-Stow (Born at Pendock where he has lived all his life, he is involved with several charities and is a Deputy Lieutenant for the county of Greater London. In the 1980s he helped Professor Dyer with his survey of the village, which fostered his interest in mediaeval buildings and landscapes)

Pendock is a small agricultural parish of around 1,000 acres (405 hectares) and 200 inhabitants, lying in the south-west corner of Worcestershire. The A438 Tewkesbury to Ledbury road crosses its eastern boundary and the B4208 Gloucester to Worcester road runs through its western end. The M50 motorway passes just below the church. The name is derived from the old Welsh words *Pen* meaning hill and *Heiddiog* meaning barley; Pendock is indeed on one of the first bits of higher ground rising out of the Severn valley and barley will still flourish there.

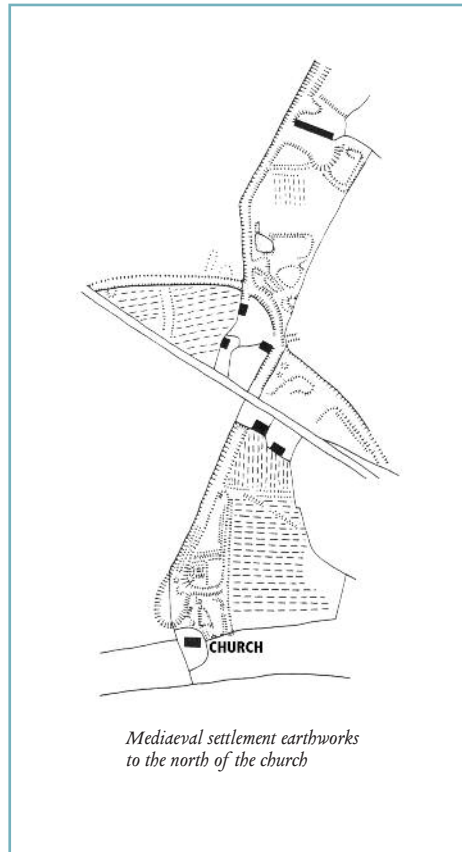
Farming has been the staple since prehistory. The village was extensively surveyed in the late 1980s by Professor Christopher Dyer of Birmingham University School of History. His findings, published in *Medieval Archaeology* 34, 1990, point to traces of Stone Age farming, followed by widespread evidence of agricultural activity during the Roman period (43 BC – AD 410). Professor Dyer has conjectured that, based on evidence here and elsewhere, the 4th-century AD population in the village was only matched immediately prior to the Black Death, and probably not since then, until relatively recent times.

The earliest certain reference to Pendock dates from AD 967 when Bishop Oswald granted land there to a layman. This and other documents show links between the village and Overbury on the other side of the Severn. Again, according to Professor Dyer, such inter-village linking was done for simple economic reasons. Pendock by that time was primarily a timber-growing area; Overbury was mainly arable. A 10th-century boundary description exists, which refers to landmarks that can still be recognised, for example Cran Mere (or heron's pond) now called Cromer Lake.

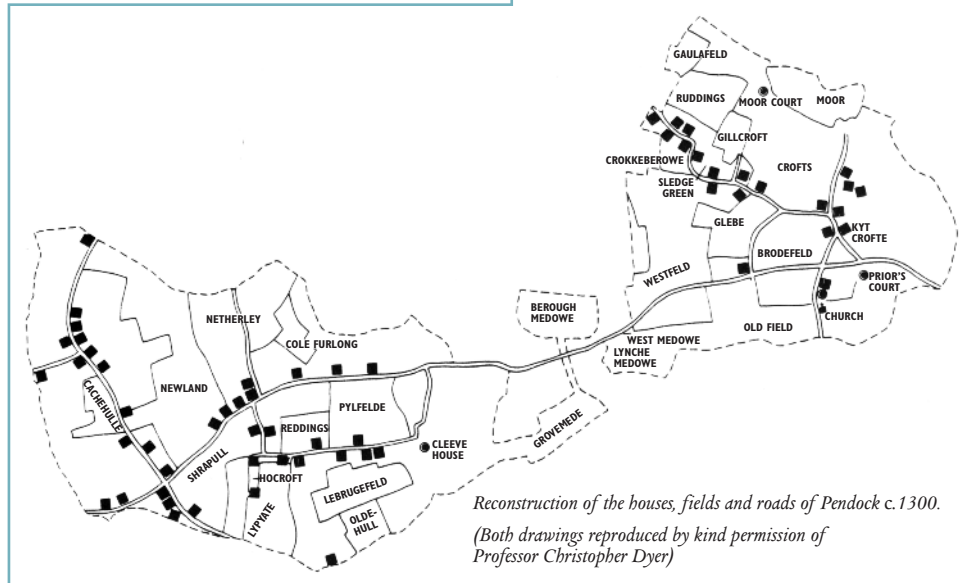
*Front cover: North porch
(Christopher Dalton)*

*Left: Exterior from the south-east
(Christopher Dalton)*

At the time of Domesday (1086), Pendock was still in large part a timber-producing appendage of Overbury. The Book's description shows the whole area to be heavily wooded, in sharp contrast to the open cultivation of the Roman period. By that time the village was split in two and remains so to this day. From the available evidence it appears that the western half was that linked to Overbury and in the possession of the monks at Worcester. The eastern half almost certainly formed the manor described in Domesday as being held by Urse d'Abetot, a powerful local sheriff who spent much time



Mediaeval settlement earthworks to the north of the church



*Reconstruction of the houses, fields and roads of Pendock c.1300.
(Both drawings reproduced by kind permission of Professor Christopher Dyer)*



Detail of north door (Christopher Dalton)

EXTERIOR

furthering land claims against his neighbours. It would have been one of his successors who built the church a hundred years later. It is possible that it replaced an older building, though no certain evidence of this survives. Lords built churches often as investments in their estates, from which they gained material benefits as well as the status of benefactors of religious life.

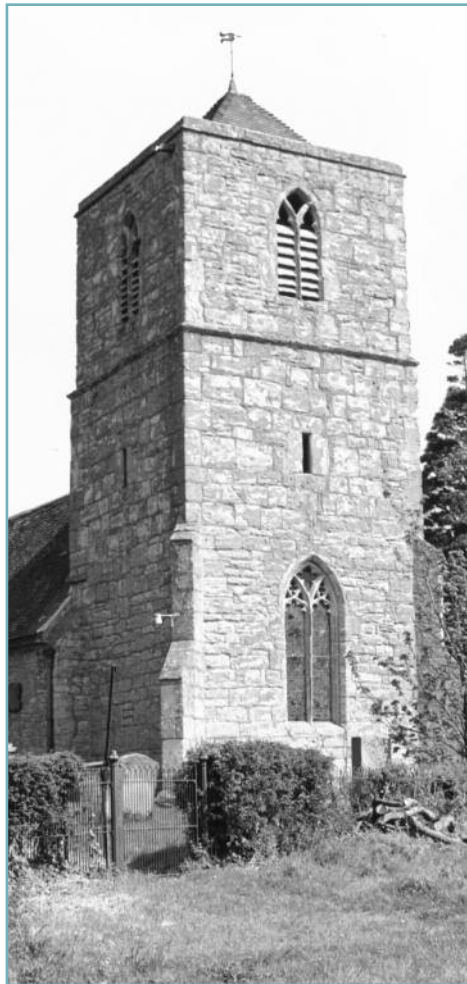
THE VILLAGE

One of the most striking things about Pendock church is that it sits alone on the edge of a field with nothing else around it. Of course, that was not always the case. Immediately to the north of the churchyard several hollows in the field probably mark the site of the manor house of the d'Abetots' successor as lords, the de Pendocks. Then there is the old village pond (now dry) adjacent; and the hollow way, running north, is one of several well-defined mediaeval trackways, spread throughout the village. Pendock's mediaeval houses were laid out along these roads, although not in any concentrated way, providing a typical example of a dispersed type of settlement. The enclosure movement had an early start in this part of the world and encouraged dispersal, as farmers cleared woodlands and lived on the land they had acquired, allowing them to live on or near their fields, unlike the people of large villages who had to journey back and forth to their land. In evidence of this, several of the local farmhouses have late mediaeval cores.

The nave and chancel of Pendock's little church (of unknown dedication) were built around 1170 of local sandstone. The original roof would almost certainly have been thatched and its steeper roof line can still be seen on the east face of the tower. However, it has been retiled more than once since, most recently in 1990. The walls are of typical hollow Norman construction and had to receive major surgery when the roof was repaired. There are ashlar quoins at the corners and two later buttresses near the west end of the south wall. The original north and south doorways are round-headed. The north, which presumably was always the more used, has good zigzag decoration on arch and capitals. The doors are ancient, studded with rows of nails and with plain strap hinges. The initials WAS in the north door handle-ring are for W A Strong, rector 1888–97. The north doorway is sheltered by a pretty timber-framed porch, post-Reformation and probably late 16th century.

The present windows were cut in the walls in the 14th century but have all been reconstructed at various times since. However, high up on the south-east corner of the east end of the nave, and above the chancel roof, is the outline of a much earlier rectangular opening. Presumably this was an original window put there to throw light on the rood loft (see below).

In the 19th century a vestry was added. G R Clarke carried out a gentle restoration in 1873.



The tower was built later than the nave in the early part of the 14th century and almost certainly was part of a widespread local defence scheme resulting from the Welsh wars. It has three stages with buttresses on the western angles, a pyramidal roof, small original loopholes in the three exposed walls of the middle stage and larger two-light windows in the belfry stage. The tracery of the west window and the tower arch are particularly handsome. The bells, hung in a fine cage dated 1687, are as follows:

- Treble by Abel Rudhall of Gloucester 1753
- Second by Abraham Rudhall I of Gloucester 1686
- Third by Abel Rudhall of Gloucester 1745
- Tenor by H Bond of Burford 1908.

There are the remains of a ring of five, probably all originally cast in 1686, of which the original second has long been missing.

The tower (Christopher Dalton)

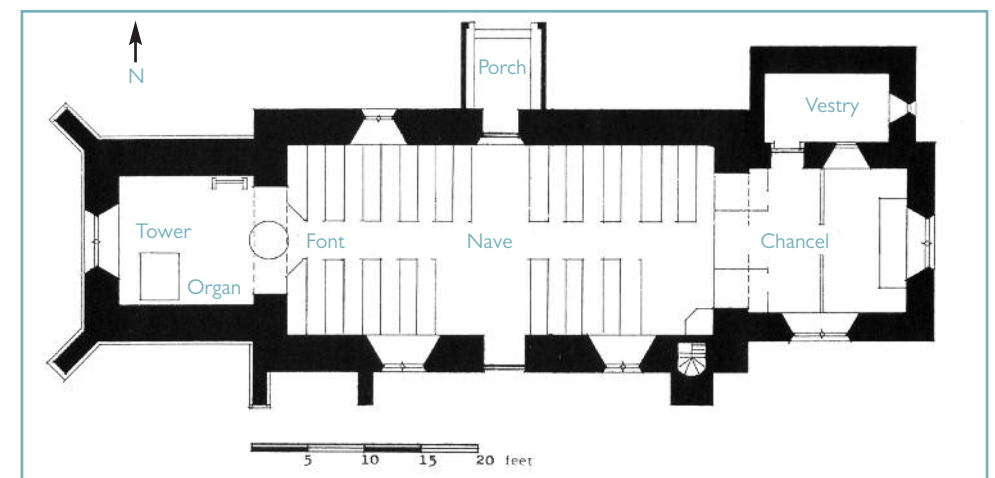
INTERIOR

There are many interesting features among the fabric and furnishings. The 10th-century font is the oldest element in the church, small and simple. The bricked-up arch behind the pulpit gave access to the stairs to the rood loft. The stairs are still there in the wall-space and the opening to the loft itself may be seen above.

The east window is glazed with panels of the Resurrection and the Ascension c.1847 and is perhaps by William Warrington. The south chancel window shows Christ the Sower and Christ the Good Shepherd c.1874. The nave north window (by Hardman) depicts the Light of the World (Christ with a pilgrim) c.1897. The nave south-east contains geometrical patterns c.1858; this window interestingly has at some

stage been played back to throw light on the pulpit. The nave south-west has Christ the Sower and The Good Samaritan c.1880. But the finest is surely the west window in the tower which is a memorial to the Revd William Symonds, rector and author of *Malvern Chase*, erected in 1887. The hyacinths are a rebus of his daughter's name.

The pews, which have linenfold panelling, date from the reign of Edward VI in the mid-16th century; they were therefore installed at the very beginning of the Reformation. The king granted permission for the oak to be obtained from the Forest of Dean. However, there has been some subsequent rearrangement and alteration, and the choir stalls appear to have



Right: The Georgian chamber organ
(Christopher Dalton)

Below: Monument to Sir Joseph Hooker
(© Crown copyright. NMR)

been made, in part at least, out of panels taken from the nave. Similarly the oak screen is made from parts of two different screens. The bronze monument on the north side of the nave is to Sir Joseph Dalton Hooker. He was a distinguished botanist, Director of the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew for 20 years and President of the Royal Society from 1872–77. He married the Revd W S Symonds' daughter, Hyacinth. The sanctuary chair is Jacobean, as is the altar rail – from the time of Archbishop Laud in the early 17th century. The little round balusters in the rail are in fact



oval to the touch, the result of being produced on a foot-powered lathe. In the south wall of the chancel is a piscina with plain gable-head and deep square basin. The north window in the chancel is original and retains its old stanchion and saddlebars; it now looks into the vestry. The chancel arch has been reconstructed but retains the intermittent remains of 12th-century chevron ornament.

A quaint vertical ladder provides the only access to the upper part of the tower, and there are fine boards painted with the Lord's Prayer, the Creed and the Ten Commandments – the last dated 1851 but the other surely of the 18th century. These boards replaced earlier scripts painted on the north and south walls of the nave which are still in existence under the limewash. On the north side of the east wall of the nave beside the chancel arch can be seen just a fragment of the wall paintings that cover the walls of the nave, said in places to be up to 16 coats thick. Some exploration work was carried out in the early 1940s by Miss Elsie Matley-Moore.

Interior looking east (Christopher Dalton)

Her watercolour reproductions of the originals are in the possession of the City of Birmingham Art Gallery. One day perhaps sufficient money will be available for a full restoration!

The little Georgian chamber organ in its simple classical case was last restored by Nicholsons of Worcester in 1978. Elgar composed two short pieces for such an instrument and, as he had connections with the Symonds family, it is possible that they were written for it and, indeed, that he played it.

The isolated position of Pendock church and the small population, together with the need for major repairs, resulted in its being made redundant and its vesting in The Churches Conservation Trust in November 1987. Repairs have subsequently been carried out under the supervision of first, John Bucknall and then Andrew Brookes of Rodney Melville & Partners, Leamington Spa. A few services are still held in the church each year.



THE CHURCHES CONSERVATION TRUST

The Churches Conservation Trust is the leading charity that cares for and preserves English churches of historic, architectural or archaeological importance that are no longer needed for regular worship. It promotes public enjoyment of them and their use as an educational and community resource.

Whatever the condition of the church when the Trust takes it over its aims are, first and foremost, to put the building and its contents into a sound and secure condition as speedily as possible. Then the church is repaired so that the church is welcoming to visitors and those who attend the public events or occasional services that may be held there (Trust churches are still consecrated). Our objective is to keep it intact for the benefit of present and future generations, for local people and visitors alike to behold and enjoy.

There are over 330 Trust churches scattered widely through the length and breadth of England, in town and country, ranging from charmingly simple buildings in lovely settings to others of great richness and splendour; some are hard to find, all are worth the effort.

Many of the churches are open all year round, others have keyholders nearby; all are free. A notice regarding opening arrangements or keyholders will normally be found near the door. Otherwise, such information can be obtained direct from the Trust during office hours or from the website www.visitchurches.org.uk.

Visitors are most welcome and we hope this guidebook will encourage you to explore these wonderful buildings.

NEARBY ARE THE TRUST CHURCHES OF

St Mary, Little Washbourne
6 miles E of Tewkesbury off B4077,
5 miles E of M5 Junction 9

St John the Baptist, Strensham
6 miles SW of Pershore adjacent to Strensham
services southbound M5. Follow signs to
Strensham from A4104

Yatton Chapel
5 miles N of Ross-on-Wye off B4224/A449

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