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HOLY TRINITY CHURCH

by Philip Exton

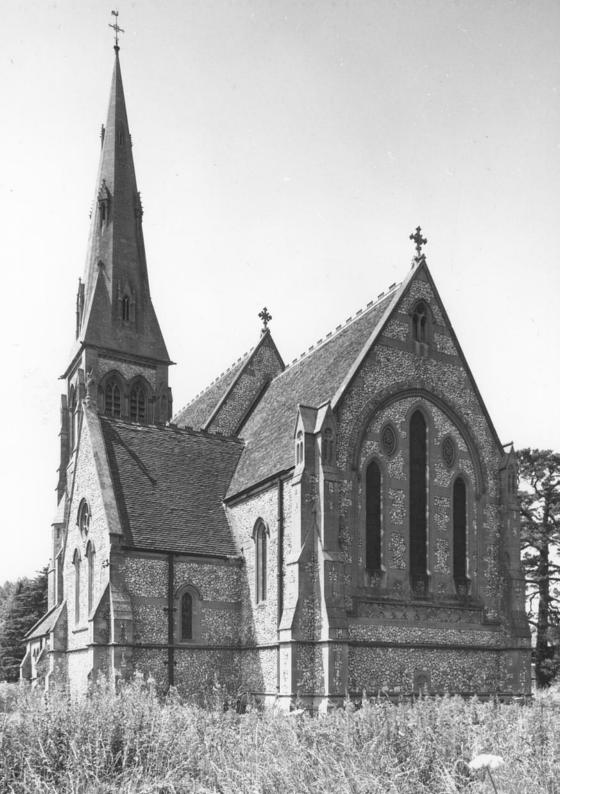
Privett church is a 19th-century replacement of a small medieval building, the chancel of which stood where now rises the commanding tower and spire of Holy Trinity. Buildings comparable with its predecessor can still be seen at Priors Dean and Colemore. The place name derives from 'privet copse'.

The impetus for the creation of the present church came from the Nicholson family, famous as distillers. They lived in Basing Park, now demolished.

Sir Arthur Blomfield was architect, and the church was built between 1876 and 1878. It cost £22,000. There have been no significant alterations since. It consists of a four-bay nave with aisles and clerestory, transepts, an unaisled chancel, and the magnificent tower and spire 160ft (48.8 m) high. There is a north porch. The style is that of the 13th century, with simple lancet windows but more elaboration on the tower and spire and interior.

Front cover: Interior looking east

Left: Exterior from the south-east





The resources available gave an opportunity for the production of a 'medieval' church, in accordance with the philosophy of the time. To today's visitor it is a Victorian church, and characteristic of the best of them. Scale and proportion (particularly of the arcades and tower) create an effect of stateliness, while the colour of the interior stone (from the Ham Hill and the Bath quarries with a telling band of pink Corsehill stone round the walls) gives a warmth which might otherwise be lacking. The builders were Dove Brothers of Islington.

The original fittings are of a quality to match the structure and would have been made by craftsmen chosen by Blomfield, often to his designs. Messrs Farmer and Brindley provided the stonecarvings, such as the elaborate reredos. The font is of Mansfield stone. Most of the stained glass is by Heaton, Butler and Bayne. The Italian marble mosaic floors are an outstanding feature of the building. Two ladies of the Nicholson family gave the original altar

cloth, which was worked in Belgium. There is a notable ring of eight bells, cast in 1877 by Mears and Stainbank of Whitechapel.

As the church was built only in 1876–78 there are few monuments. In the south aisle is one to G M Nicholson, who died while trying to rescue a workman overcome by foul air at the distillery. Those to members of the Parry family under the tower were evidently retained from the earlier church. Caroline Martineau was a sister of Admiral Parry, the Arctic explorer.

Sir Arthur Blomfield (1829–99) was a typical Victorian church architect. Son of the Bishop of London, he later designed another large church in Hampshire, St Mary Portsea (1887–89). He is not one of those whose work has been increasingly appreciated in recent years. However at Holy Trinity, Privett, he had ample resources for structure and fittings and no need to accommodate any part of the former church. He rose to the occasion.

With the Nicholsons gone, the disparity between the size of the church and the needs and resources of the parish had led, by the 1960s, to a retreat to the south transept. From this time onwards the fine organ, the pews and some other fittings were disposed of. Subsequently the church was declared redundant, and a period of uncertainty was ended when in November 1980 it was vested in the Redundant Churches Fund, now The Churches Conservation Trust.

Repairs, particularly to the steeply-pitched tiled roofs, have been carried out for the Trust by Messrs R J Smith & Co. of Whitchurch under the direction initially of Thomas K Makins, FRIBA, architect of Portsmouth, and more recently Louise Bainbridge, RIBA, of Winchester.



Left: The nave roof looking west

Right: The pulpit

THE CHURCHES CONSERVATION TRUST

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

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