



## **The Parish Church of St. Andrew**

St Andrew's Church Nunton is a beautifully situated and excellently maintained church just three miles south of Salisbury. It lies in the lovely Chalke Valley with the River Ebbles running nearby. The Parish also includes Odstock church (St Mary's) just along the valley and the Parish is served by the Chalke Valley Benefice - a team ministry for the parishes along the valley of the River Ebbles.

The Parish dates from 1915 when Nunton was linked with Odstock into a single parish. Prior to this date St. Andrew's was what is termed a Chapel of Ease for Downton. The church registers go back to 1672 and the church possesses a chalice bearing the date 1677. The present building dates from 1854-55 and consists of a nave, chancel, south aisle, Lady chapel and a short tower containing three bells. It stands on the site of an earlier church believed to date from Saxon times. The only remains of this are the pillars of the chancel arch (with what are probably Saxon capitals), the west arch of the chapel and the wall opposite to it. During repairs in 1942 to the windows of the Lady chapel, it was found that at some time in the fourteenth century the carved heads of a two light window were cut out of a flat tapering tomb lid of local stone, bearing an ornamental cross dating from the thirteenth century, which was placed sideways across the window. The lines are lightly incised and the foot of the cross, now hidden, may have been stepped. The stone has been preserved carefully so that its arrangement and the remains of the cross may be seen.

In 1933, during the restoration, the present organ chamber and vestry were added to the north east corner of the chancel and the organ removed from the Lady chapel, which was furnished by a local family. In the East window St. Andrew, to whom the church is dedicated, is seen leaving his fishing to answer the call of Christ and, opposite, bringing the boy with his loaves and fishes to the Master. This window replaced one given by Major General Buckley when he restored the church 1854-1855.

As in every church, there are plaques and monuments each having its own particular interest, but one tablet to the right of the organ may be deserving of special mention. It commemorates Ernest Charles Fray who was organist of the church from 1908-1970 - sixty two years of faithful devoted service are worthy of remembrance.

Parts of Nunton's church masonry dates from c. 1200. It was annexed as a chapel to Downton church, which, in 1086, was the minster church 'the church of the ... manor' (with more than one priest) serving several villages. On so rich an episcopal manor, between 1066 and 1086, the church was assigned a substantial estate. A rector was then appointed - a parson was first mentioned in 1147.

The living remained a rectory until 1382 when, under royal licence, the church was appropriated by Bishop Wykeham to endow Winchester College. A vicarage was ordained in 1383. But, without those 'great tithes', in 1413 a vicar complained to Winchester College that his income was not sufficient to maintain him. Nicholas Young, vicar 1420 - 1428, failed to provide chaplains because of the cost. College and vicar confirmed the 1383 endowment: he agreed to serve the chapels, the college settled his debt of 100 marks - but the problem persisted.

In 1535 the vicarage's net value was £20; and £26 13s. 4d in 1584 (comparing well with other parishes). To maintain divine service in Nunton church the college paid the vicar of Downton a pension, said in 1580 to be 40s., and gave a gown or 10s. for the use of the curate at Nunton. In 1650 the parliamentary commissioners valued the living at £48 10s. after a £25 parliamentary augmentation for the six months to Michaelmas: giving a further £30 in 1655. In 1781 the College made a favourable lease of Nunton and Bodenham's great tithes to the vicar for £15 a year, part of his additional income would go to Nunton. The living's £571 annual income of 1829–31 was above average; in 1837, the tithes' value was £150; but in 1882, the college withdrew the lease.

In 1577 and in 1585, the curate's house was in decay. A new house was built, and a school room added at the back, c. 1830 at the church's south side - but by 1864 it was, again, unfit for a curate. A rectory-house for the parish of Odstock with Nunton and Bodenham was built on the south side of the Nunton-Bodenham road in 1914.

In 1662 Nunton's inhabitants petitioned Winchester College for a resident minister: in nearly two years the curate of Downton had preached at Nunton only twice. In the early 18th century there was a resident curate but (until 1829) there was not always one, even after the college leased the great tithes to the vicar in 1781. In 1783 the church was served only once a month: the Sacrament administered four times a year.

Although Downton remained the only church on the manor for less than a century after the Conquest, it continued to serve and receive their tithes from the whole manor of Downton. Early-medieval development of Avon valley villages led to three new churches (Witherington, Standlynch, and Nunton), and the 19th-century population increase in the south-east of the parish, led to another three churches (Redlynch, Charlton, and Morgan's Vale). The inhabitants' attempts to make Nunton church independent of Downton church in the 16th and 17th centuries failed. In 1934 it was transferred to Odstock parish.

## **Bells**

There were three bells in 1553. The (original) treble bears no inscription; the tenor was replaced by a bell founded by William Purdue in 1641; the other bell was replaced by one founded by Clement Tosier in 1701. Those three bells still hang in the church.

## **Plate**

There were 22½ oz. of plate in 1553 when 14 oz. were taken for the king. A new chalice and paten cover were given in 1677 and a paten similar to those of Downton hall-marked 1778 was given later - and some 20th-century plate.

## **Registers**

The registers are complete from 1672.