

**A Guide to the Parish Church of
St. Mary Magdalene,
Milton**



by

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based on notes
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History

If the saying "Happy is the nation which has no history" is equally true as applied to Churches, then Milton may be accounted fortunate, since it has but little history, remaining for the most part veiled in obscurity. The Church itself is first mentioned, as far as is known, in a Synodical of Christchurch Priory for 1270, when "the Chapel of Milton" is assessed at the sum of fifteen pence as its contribution to the charges paid by the Priory to the Bishop. How long before that date the Chapel was in existence cannot be ascertained; nor yet whether it stood in the same place as the Parish Church of today.

The Parish

The ecclesiastical history of Milton is hardly less obscure than the rest of the record. The Chapel was attached to Christchurch Priory until the dissolution in 1539, and had no Clergy of its own, being served by Priests from the Priory. In 1539 it was transferred to Milford, and for two hundred and fifty years was under the care of the Vicars of Milford, still the patrons of the living, who came themselves, or sent their Curates, to attend to its needs.

The spiritual forbears of the Incumbents of Milton must therefore be sought in the Priors of Christchurch down to 1539, and in the Vicars of Milford from 1539 till 1791, in which year Milton was at length permitted to have a separate Minister, being created a Perpetual Curacy, the equivalent of a Vicarage. Research has revealed the names and dates of certain "Curates" belonging more or less strictly to Milton, appointed from Milford, whose jurisdiction extended over the Parishes now known as Milford, Hordle and Milton. The list of the "Curates" begins in 1670, and finishes in 1791 with the establishment of the Perpetual Curacy. In 1867 the benefice was constituted a Rectory by Order in Council, and is in the gift of the Vicar of Milford.

The first book of the Registers contains all entries from 1695 until 1739, and a transcript of those from 1654 until 1691, with a few gaps.

The Church

The Church as it stood until 1831, as will be seen from the old prints in the gallery stairway, was a quaint little building with a low sloping roof, dormer windows and an entrance on the south side. A fragment of window tracery from the old Church is to be seen on a plaque under the pulpit. In that year it was rebuilt, except for the tower, in an exceedingly plain manner, consisting of a box-like nave of brick, with "Gothick" windows of a poor design, and a very small Sanctuary. This building served the original small village of Milton well enough until the nineteen-twenties when, owing to the vast growth of the old village into a town of some size, it had become quite inadequate. Some people proposed to build a new Church on another site, but it was felt better after all to enlarge on the traditional site retaining the tower and improving the internal appearance of the nave, and at the same time throwing out a large eastern extension, thus increasing the seating accommodation from 300 to 500, and also the spaciousness of the whole building.

Enlargement

Work started in July 1928 under the direction of Mr. Howard Robinson, of the firm of Easton & Robinson, as architect, the builders being Messrs. H. H. Drew & Son, of New Milton. The total cost was in the neighbourhood of £6,000. During the time that work was in progress, celebrations of the Holy Communion took place in the then Parish Hall, while Matins and Evensong were held in the Scala Cinema, Station Road, which has long ceased to exist. The present Hall, adjoining the Church, was built in 1932, and replaced the old Parish School, which had also served as a Hall.

The new extension was consecrated by the then Bishop of Southampton on the 15th December, 1928, and everyone seems to have been amazed at the wonderful transformation that had been accomplished. "The result of the work is strangely and unexpectedly satisfying," wrote the Rector, the Reverend Maxwell Hutchinson, in the Parish Magazine. "It is indeed obvious that a surprisingly beautiful 'silk purse' has been reconstructed out of the traditional 'sow's ear', and that the interior of the Church now exhibits a dignity and beauty which is in complete contrast to the cramped ugliness which it has replaced."

Description

The Tower

The Church is entered through the low tower, the oldest part of the building now existing. This is of stone and dates from the early 17th century and contains one bell. An expert from the Central Council for the Care of Churches in 1970 examined this single bell in the tower, and reported that it has characteristics which suggest it to be a late 14th century London bell, cast during the time of the Guild of Bell-makers. As this Guild held most of their marks in common, and this appears to apply to their common moulds as well, it is very difficult if not impossible, to suggest a probable founder. The other bell which formerly hung in the tower, and which is believed to have been cast in 1593, was given to the new Church of St. Peter's, Ashley, in the parish, in 1957. The 14th century bell in the Parish Church Tower is properly hung for ringing, though it is only used for announcing week-day services, and the early Service on Sunday morning. It is supplemented by a system of recorded bells which are played through a number of loud speakers on the top of the tower, a system which was installed in 1950, and was the gift of a parishioner.

On the left of the doorway as one enters the porch is a fine monument with demi-effigy commemorating Thomas White, who served Three Kings and Queen Anne as a Commander in "ye Guards and was much wounded in the Warns of Ireland and Flanders", and died in 1720. Preserved in a case beside the monument is a real rapier, reproduced in the marble effigy, with its hilt inlaid in silver and said to be the work of Andrea Ferrara. Frances White, widow of Thomas presented to the Church its beautiful set of Communion plate in the year 1727.

The Nave

The nave, as has been said, is of brick with Gothic windows of poor design but it has been immeasurably improved in appearance as part of the alterations made for the extension of the Church in 1928. The bulky-looking organ and the ugly green distemper on the walls are gone, while the hideous iron tie-beams supporting the roof are hidden under a concave ceiling. In the north-west corner of the nave there is a relic of the original Milton Church.

It is an old chest of oak, dating probably from the 15th century, and has two locks.

The Font dates from 1887, and was given by the descendants of Captain Marryatt, the author of the fascinating story "Children of the New Forest" and who lived at Chewton Glen in the parish. The inscription round the base of the font runs "To the glory of God, and in memory of their father and mother, Lucy D. Marryatt and William D. Clinton gave this font 1887." On the front of the gallery is a mosaic depicting St. Nicholas the Patron Saint of Sailors. which was given by Miss C. C. Clark and Miss Mabel S. Maughan "in reverent memory of our parents and sisters".

The Lady Chapel

The Lady Chapel of four bays was added to the north side of the nave to the design of Mr. Sebastian Comper. It was consecrated on 1st July, 1958, and the cost was just over £5,000, or only £1,000 less than the new Chancel had cost thirty years before. The style chosen is a free interpretation of Gothic: the windows are round-headed, but with tracery of the 14th century type. The roof is barrel-vaulted with ribs. In this Chapel the Reserved Sacrament is kept in an aumbry on the North Wall of the Sanctuary.

Windows

Five stained glass windows adorn the Church. One, portraying the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, is in the South Chapel. Its companion, depicting the Adoration of the Magi, originally faced it in the enlarged Church, but was placed in the Lady Chapel in 1958. The latter was given in 1932 by Mrs. Louisa Skoyles, who used to live in Gore Grange, Gore Road, shortly before her death. The window in the South Chapel, was presented by her daughter, Miss Margaret Skoyles, in 1934. Miss Skoyles ultimately moved to Wymondham, Norfolk, and on her death in 1968 left the considerable bequest of £12,000 to the Parish of Milton. Both these windows were designed and made by the firm of Abbot & Company, of London and Lancaster.

In the Sanctuary there are three windows. In the south wall is the original east window from the Church as it was prior to the enlargement in 1928. It is clearly of Victorian glass, and depicts the Resurrection. It is not unattractive, and its effect is lightened by its surround of grisaille

and hammered glass. High up on the north side are two small semi-circular lights, which were installed in 1934. One is of the Crucifixion, and the other portrays the Lamb of God and both of these were also the work of Abbott & Company.

The Chancel and Sanctuary

The eastern extension of the Church dating from 1928, consists of a chancel, with organ chamber, and a side chapel in the south transept, and vestries on the north of the Sanctuary.

The original organ, built in 1885 by the small but progressive Bristol firm of W. G. Vowles, and which was the gift of the then Rector's wife, Mrs. Robinson, was replaced by a much larger instrument to the design of George Osmund & Company of Taunton, in 1966, at a cost of £6,000. This occupies the whole of the organ chamber, and necessitated the provision of a detached console just outside the Chancel screen on the south side. The new Organ was dedicated by the Bishop of Winchester, the Right Reverend Falkner S. Allison, on Sunday 24th July, 1966, and a full specification is to be seen in a frame by the console.

The Chancel is entered through the centre arch of a triple row of round arches, those on either side having light oak screens. The choir stalls are Australian oak; were carved locally by Mr. Drew, and are in memory of the Reverend John Edward Kelsall, a former Rector (1897-1924). He was the originator of the enlargement scheme so it is very fitting that his memorial should be where it is. On the north side of the Sanctuary is a plaque designed by Evelyn Beale, the gift of James Heber Clegg in 1936. The east end, instead of the conventional stained-glass window, has a blind wall, upon which is displayed a gold cross with rays on a blue background, a very wonderful feature to which the eye is instinctively drawn from all parts of the building.

The Altar, formerly screened by riddel curtains, was lengthened, made free-standing and covered with a Laudian or draped frontal in 1962. This was the gift of a parishioner who wished to remain anonymous. By the same gift two tall candlesticks were presented with the intention of bringing together the wall-cross and Altar.

The words of the late Sir Charles Nicholson, the eminent architect, form a fitting conclusion to this description of the Church building. In his capacity as Diocesan architect he wrote as follows, "I think the

architects have handled a difficult problem with unusual skill, with a very satisfactory result." This is a verdict upon which all are agreed, and may Milton Church continue for many generations to be an inspiration to parishioners and visitors alike.

St. Peter's and St. John's



There are two other Churches which help to serve this now extensive and populous parish. St. Peter's Church at Ashley was built in 1957, again to the design of Mr. Sebastian Comper. It replaced an old wooden building dating from 1904.

St. John the Baptist's Church at Bashley, towards the Forest, was built in 1910 for what now seems the very moderate sum of £300. Both Churches have a vigorous life of worship and service of their own.



Priors of Christchurch (13th – 16th centuries)

| | | | |
|-----------|-------------------------|-----------|-----------------|
| 1272 | Nicholas de Sturminster | 1357-77 | Henry Eyre |
| 1272-78 | John de Abingdon | 1377-97 | John Wodenham |
| 1278- | William de Nitheravene | 1397 | John Borard |
| 1287-1302 | Richard Maury | 1420(d) | Thomas Talbot |
| 1302-17 | William Quyntyn | | John Wimborne |
| 1317 | Walter Tydolneshide | | William Norton |
| 1323-27 | Edmund de Ramsbury | c.1450 | John Dorchester |
| 1337 | Richard de Busthome | 1477-1501 | John Draper 1 |
| 1340 | Robert de Legh | 1501-20 | William Eyre |
| 1345-57 | William Tyrewache | 1521-39 | John Draper 11 |

Vicars of Milford (1539-1791)

| | | | |
|---------|-------------------|-----------|-------------------|
| 1537-57 | Edward Kyxley | 1671-79 | Samuel Torksey |
| 1557- | Robert Frankyss | 1679-1722 | John Birkett |
| 1593- | John Hinde | 1722-6 | Leonard Milbourne |
| 1617-39 | Thomas Dolling | 1746-58 | Heti Harrison |
| 1639-44 | Thomas Lancaster | 1759-86 | Bolton Simpson |
| 1644-46 | vacant | 1786-95 | John Fawcett |
| 1646-70 | Christopher Airay | | |

Curates of Milton (1670-1791)

| | | | |
|-----------|------------------|---------|------------------|
| 1670-1711 | Richard Marns | 1772-78 | William Jackson |
| 1712-20 | Richard Thompson | 1778-81 | W. A. Heywood |
| ? -1748 | "Rev. Mr. Smith" | 1782-85 | Philip le Brocq |
| 1752-73 | William Hillman | 1786-88 | Daniel Lancaster |
| 1754-57 | Jacob Jefferson | 1786-90 | Anthony Davidson |
| 1758-64 | Henry Gabell | | |
| 1765-71 | William Dale | | |

Perpetual Curates of Milton (1791-1867)

| | | | |
|-----------|----------------------|---------|-------------------|
| 1791-1805 | Anthony Davidson | 1826-40 | John Browne |
| 1805--08 | Thomas Wyndham | 1840-53 | Francis Tyrrell |
| 1808-22 | William Hooper, B.D. | 1853-67 | Philip Somerville |
| 1822-26 | Robert Dickinson | | |

Rectors of Milton (from 1867)

| | |
|-----------|------------------------------------------|
| 1867-75 | Philip Somerville, M.A. |
| 1875-97 | Thomas Bond Bird Robinson, M.A. |
| 1897-1924 | John Edward Kelsall, M.A. |
| 1925-1940 | William Gregor Maxwell Hutchinson, M.A. |
| 1940-1946 | Irven David Edwards, M.A. |
| 1946-1953 | Hugh Charles Blackburne M.A. |
| 1953-1960 | Patrick Henry Augustine Hogg, M.C., M.A. |
| 1960-1971 | Geoffrey Grenville Finch, M.A. |
| 1972-1993 | Stephen Anthony Outhwaite |
| 1993- | Andrew Henley Bailey, A.K.C. |