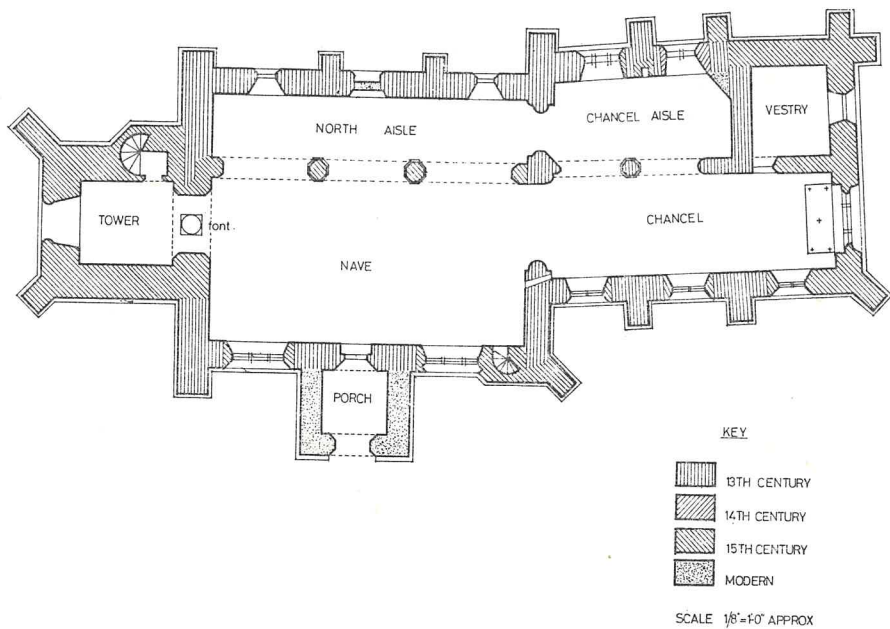


PITSTONE
CHURCH
PRICE 30p



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Front cover photograph
Pitstone St. Mary,
Tower from south-west



The front and back cover photographs and those on pp. 1 and 2 of the inset were taken for the Fund by Christopher Dalton. The photographs on pp. 3 and 4 of the inset were taken by Mary Farnell, except for the font, by Christopher Dalton.

REDUNDANT CHURCHES FUND
ST. ANDREW-BY-THE-WARDROBE, QUEEN VICTORIA STREET,
LONDON EC4V 5DE

PITSTONE CHURCH, DEDICATED to St. Mary the Virgin, was probably founded about 1180 by the Lord of the Pitstone manor of "Morrants", which stood in the field very near the church and to the north-east. The manor at that time was held by William de Chenduit, hereditary serjeant of Berkhamsted Castle, who held many manors in Hertfordshire and Buckinghamshire, as well as his own, "Chenduit Manor" in King's Langley. Of this church, built in the then prevailing Norman fashion, only the beautiful *font* remains. It is one of several highly accomplished, locally-made "Aylesbury" fonts.

The manor and church remained with the Chenduit family for two more generations, the last holder, Julian Chenduit, being probably the benefactor of the *chancel* and *north chapel* built about 1230. The *chancel arcade capitals*, carved in the Early Gothic manner known as "stiff-leaf foliage", are outstanding. This is again local work, known especially at Ivinghoe and Eaton Bray. There also remains a unique collection of *medieval floor tiles*, relaid in the chancel sanctuary.

During the Baronial and Simon de Montfort rebellions (1258–65), Pitstone church passed into the hands of the ambitious Neyrnut family of Neyrnut Manor, Pitstone Green(?). Several members of the family became rectors of the church in succession, and during their time the *nave walls* were built (c. 1290, although the south windows were added later), and the unusual *medieval chest* acquired. The *brass* on the chancel arch pillar is probably of the wife of Sir John Neyrnut, who fought for King Edward I in the conquest of Wales and Scotland and was a knight of the shire (member of Parliament) in 1305. He died about 1324, aged about seventy two. The brass is one of the oldest brasses of a woman in England.

The fifth succeeding member of the Neyrnut family, gave the church in 1379 to Ashridge College, then a monastery within Pitstone parish. So began a new building period, about 1420, with the lengthening of the chancel, and the addition of the *vestry*, and the *chancel windows*.

This was followed by the building of the *tower* and the rebuilding of the nave (c. 1450–70), this time paid for by the parish fund-raising. The work in the nave includes the *arcade*, *south windows* and *rood stairs* (leading originally to a rood loft—a gallery across the chancel arch). Beneath the rood stairs, between nave and chancel was built a *squint*, which allowed a view of the high altar. In the north chapel a parish guild (of St. Mary?) was formed, and the *aumbry*, originally a rectangular wall locker with wooden doors, and the Decorated *piscina*, on the opposite wall, were added. The aumbry contained the sacred vessels of the guild and the piscina was used for disposing of the water used ritually in the service.

In the early 16th century, most of the *pews* were added; they have subsequently been much altered and repaired.

At the Reformation Ashridge became a royal residence and the patronage of Pitstone church passed with Morrants Manor to a certain Richard Snowe. Under the boy King, Edward VI, Royal Commissioners visited the church in 1552 and removed the vestments, silver hangings and candlesticks. Under Queen Elizabeth I, puritanical Commissioners again visited the church. It was probably during this time that the rood loft, wooden screens and altars were removed and the wall paintings, which have been detected in the nave above the chancel arch, whitewashed over.

In 1605–6 Morrants Manor and the advowson were purchased by Lord Ellesmere, the Chancellor of King James I, founder of the Bridgewater family

and creator of the Ashridge estate. His son became the 1st Earl of Bridgewater.

The church remained ill-used and was several times without its own priest. By 1637, in which year it was inspected by the archdeacon, the church was in decay. Two windows were blocked-up as the glass had been smashed, and some seats had no bottoms. As a result of the inspection, however, the present handsome Jacobean *pulpit* was installed along with the present *altar-table*.

Under Cromwell, a "Presbyterian" minister was intruded into Pitstone, and the oldest of the three surviving *bells* was cast by Anthony Chandler of Drayton Parslow in 1652.

With the restoration of King Charles II, the 2nd Earl of Bridgewater became Lord Lieutenant of Buckinghamshire. He championed the Act of Uniformity of 1662 and imprisoned a number of Quakers and Nonconformists in Aylesbury gaol, of which he was in charge, but few repairs were carried out to the church, although the *box pews* were added. Ivinghoe and Pitstone parishes were united under one vicar in 1684.

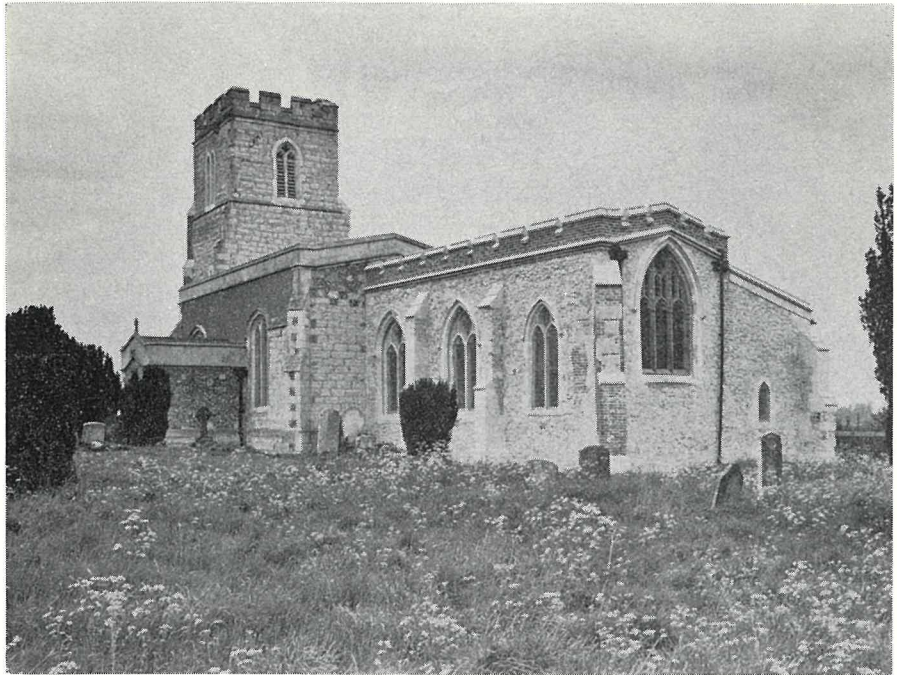
The 18th century saw little change at Pitstone. Church and parish affairs fell increasingly under the control of the vestry, who acquired powers over rates, the enforcement of law, regulation and control of the open fields and commons, town lands and town houses (the modern council house), as well as the maintenance of the church fabric. In the church they provided the *Royal Arms*, with the *Lord's Prayer* and *Ten Commandments*, dated 1733, and had two of the church bells re-cast by Robert Patrick of London in 1786.

The 19th century brought industrial influence to the heart of the country and disrupted the old harmonies and traditions. A Sunday School was started at the church, where for the first time the village children could learn to read. This was soon followed by a cottage night school where an evening "lesson" could be had for 1d. or 2d. At the church, a choir of "Psalm singers" was formed, a traditional choir of men and boys, accompanied by clarinet and bassoon.

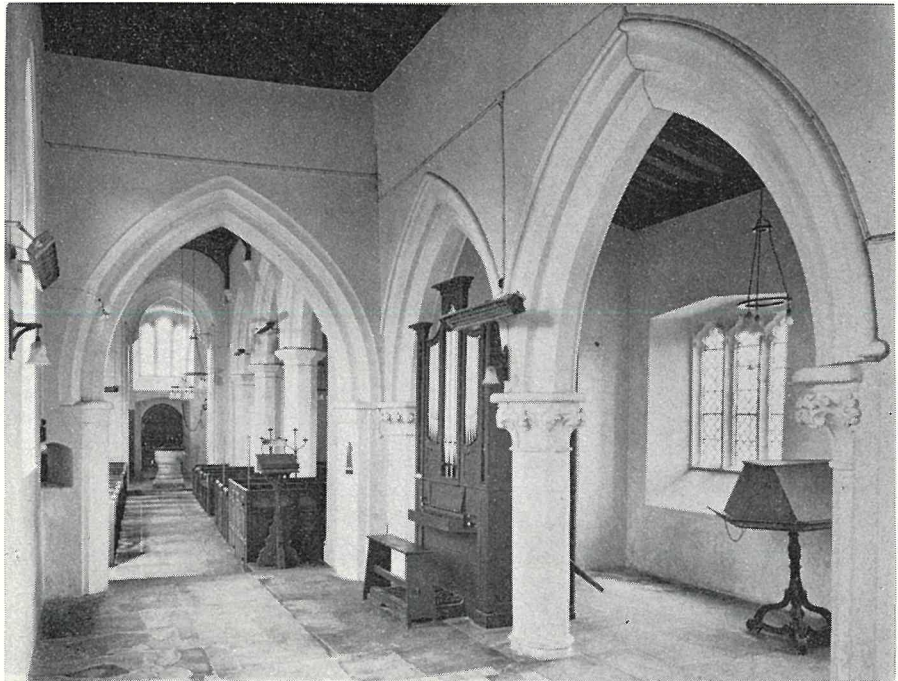
In 1827-30 a great programme of repair was undertaken. The walls were repaired, buttresses and battlements rebuilt, and the walls were covered with cement stucco (most of which was removed in 1974). Inside, the north chapel was altered into a chancel aisle: the floor was raised and laid with flag-stones, and the fire-place and chimney added. Carpentry included the alteration of the pews and addition of the book-rest and base and steps of the pulpit. The whole interior was plastered and white washed.

Pitstone shared in the religious revival brought about by the Oxford Movement, which coincided with the coming of the railway in 1838. The church services became more elaborate and two and even three services were held on Sundays, and the church acquired its own curate to administer them.

In 1845 the parish was moved from the huge diocese of Lincoln to the diocese of Oxford, and the first bishop under the new arrangement, Samuel Wilberforce, attempted to institute a proper vicar in Pitstone, with a new parsonage and schoolhouse provided by Lady Bridgewater, who ran the Ashridge Estate from 1823 to 1849. At first the bishop's plans met opposition from the perpetual curate of Pitstone. Eventually Lady Bridgewater's successor, Lady Marian Alford, generously provided the necessary money, so that in 1855 the parsonage was built, and in 1860 the schoolhouse as well. The first vicar of Pitstone saw Pitstone brought much more under the influence of "respectable society", and saw the introduction of hymn singing to a harmonium with a choir of boys.



VIEW FROM SOUTH-EAST



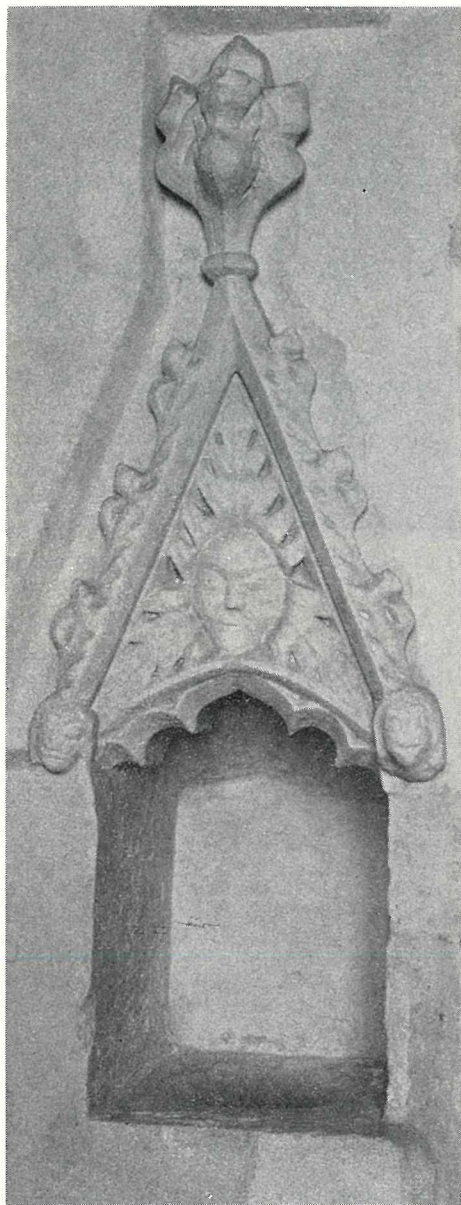
INTERIOR LOOKING WEST AND NORTH CHAPEL



17TH CENTURY ALTAR TABLE AND RAILS, MEDIEVAL TILES



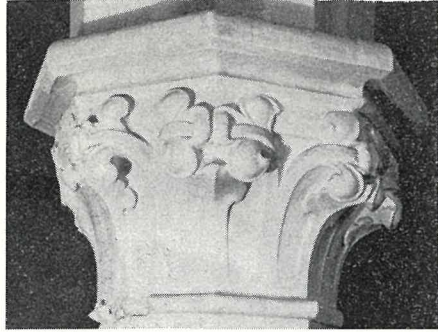
MEDIEVAL CHEST



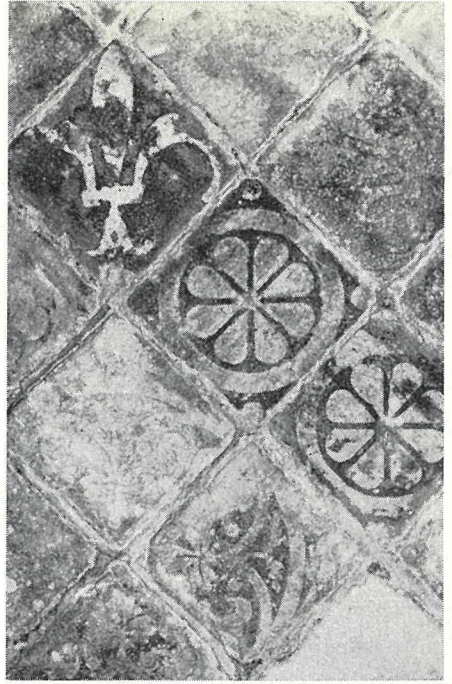
PISCINA IN NORTH CHAPEL



BRASS (? OF LADY NEYRNUT)
ON CHANCEL ARCH PILLAR



CAPITAL WITH STIFF LEAF
FOLIAGE



MEDIEVAL TILES



NORMAN ("AYLESBURY")
FONT



SANCTUARY CHAIR

In 1879 the *porch*, originally of 15th century date, was rebuilt. In 1893 the Church was re-decorated; and stained-glass was inserted in the east window as a memorial to the first vicar, and coloured glass in the nave windows. Soon after the churchyard was extended.

In 1937 the *organ* was obtained. In 1947 the parishes of Ivinghoe and Pitstone were re-united under one vicar.

Under the new procedure of the Pastoral Measure Pitstone church was declared redundant by an Order in Council with effect from 23rd January, 1973 and by a redundancy scheme under the same measure it was vested in the Redundant Churches Fund on 26th September, 1974 for care and maintenance "in the interests of the nation and the Church of England". The Fund appointed Mr. Laurence King, O.B.E., F.S.A., F.R.I.B.A., as architect, and an extensive programme of conservative repairs was carried out to his specification, the main contractors being New Stone and Restoration Ltd., of Ruislip.

J. C. Comben

PITSTONE CHURCH INCUMBENTS

RECTORS (from c. 1180)

Henry	? - 1263 (died)
[Walter de Neyrnut	? - 1263 (temporary vicar)]
Walter de Neyrnut	1263 - c. 1285
Fulk Neyrnut	c. 1285 - c. 1317
Thomas Neyrnut	1317 - c. 1334
John de Strettle	1334 - c. 1342
Roger de Strettle	1342 - c. 1349 (died in Black Death?)
John de Williamsett	1350 " " " "
Thomas Styward	1350 - c. 1373
John Smyth	1373 - c. 1381

VICARS (from 1381)

William Germain ?	fl. 1423
VACANT	1519
Arthur Torbect	fl. 1524 (Vicar of Pitstone and Nettleden)
William Setynge	fl. 1533

PERPETUAL CURATES (from 1546)

John Trewlove	fl. 1550 - c. 1558 (quitted as income insufficient)
VACANT	1561
Evan Jones	fl. 1585
Stephen Alanson	fl. 1612 - 1616
Thomas Harrison	c. 1617 - ?
John Seabrook	fl. 1637
Barnaby Holloway	fl. 1648 - 1660 (died) (Commonwealth Minister)
Reginald Burdyn	1660 - 1665 (resigned)
Mathew Bird MA	1666 - 1684

IVINGHOE & PITSTONE CONSOLIDATED (1684)

Mathew Bird MA	1684 - 1688 (died)
John Cleeve MA	1688 - 1706 (died)

William Earbury	1707 – 1728 (died)
Thomas Frewen	1729 – 1745
Edward Lucy	1745 – 1777 (died?)
[Owen Gough	1755 – 1758 (Curate-in-charge of Pitstone)]
[Many other Curates serving 2 years or less	1759 – 1775 working for Edward Lucy in Pitstone]
[Isaiah Blythe	1776 – 1780 (Curate-in-charge of Pitstone)]
Henry Manifold MA	1777 – 1794 ?
[Samuel Jackson	1782 – 1793 (Curate-in-charge of Pitstone)]
James Prosser	1794 – 1797
[Isaiah Blythe	1794 – 1803 (Curate-in-charge of Pitstone) resident in Ivinghoe]
Thomas Bart. Woodman AM	1797 – 1803
Isaiah Blythe	1803 – 1819 (died)
J. Fitz. Moore	1819 – 1821

PERPETUAL CURATES

William Shepherd	1822 – 1839 (also curate-in-charge of Cheddington)
John C. Robertson	1840 – 1843 (also curate-in-charge of Cheddington)
John Weighell BA	1845 – 1853 (died) (also Vicar of Marsworth to 1846 and Vicar of Cheddington from 1846)
[W. C. T. Baylie	1845 – 1848 (Curate-in-charge of Pitstone) 1st resident curate for many years]
[Various other Curates serving 2 years or less	1848 – 1853 working for John Weighell in Pitstone]
Charles Ring Hutchinson	1854 – 1857 (temporary curate)

VICARS (from 1857)

Charles Ring Hutchinson	1857 – 1880
F. Heath	1881 – 1893
Treffry Harvey	1894 – 1896
George Kent	1897 – 1900
W. M. Kerr	1900 – 1902
J. Ashley Broad	1903 – 1904
Edward John Scott	1905 – 1910
J. G. Evans	1913 – 1921
W. F. Dobson	1921 – 1927
T. H. Higgins	1927 – 1930
Vincent Mackreth	1930 – 1936
Amos Parr LD	1937 – 1945
[D. G. Bishop	1945 – 1947 (curate-in-charge)]

IVINGHOE AND PITSTONE CONSOLIDATED (1947)

A. S. Berey	1947 – 1954
E. J. Gargery	1954 – 1962
H. N. Smith	1964 – 1972

CHURCH CLOSED 1972

*Back cover photograph
Pitstone St. Mary
Interior looking east*

