



ST MARY'S CHURCH

MOULTON, NORFOLK



THE CHURCHES CONSERVATION TRUST

89 Fleet Street · London EC4Y 1DH

Registered Charity No. 258612

PRICE: £1.00



THE CHURCHES CONSERVATION
TRUST WELCOMES YOU TO
ST MARY'S CHURCH
MOULTON, NORFOLK

Many years ago Christians built and set apart this place for prayer. They made their church beautiful with their skill and craftsmanship. Here they have met for worship, for children to be baptised, for couples to be married and for the dead to be brought for burial. If you have time, enjoy the history, the peace and the holiness here. Please use the prayer card and, if you like it, you are welcome to take a folded copy with you.

Although services are no longer regularly held here, this church remains consecrated; inspiring, teaching and ministering through its beauty and atmosphere. It is one of more than 300 churches throughout England cared for by The Churches Conservation Trust. The Trust was created in 1969 and was, until 1994, known as the Redundant Churches Fund. Its object is to ensure that all these churches are kept in repair and cared for, in the interests of the Church and Nation, for present and future generations.

Please help us to care for this church. There is a box for donations or, if you prefer to send a gift, it will be gratefully received at the Trust's headquarters at 89 Fleet Street, London EC4Y 1DH (Registered Charity No. 258612).

We hope that you will enjoy your visit and be encouraged to see our other churches. Some are in towns; some in remote country districts. Some are easy and others hard to find but all are worth the effort.

Nearby are the Trust churches of:

BUCKENHAM, ST NICHOLAS
8 miles E of Norwich and beyond Brundall

HECKINGHAM, ST GREGORY
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HALES, ST MARGARET
12 miles SE of Norwich and E of A146

**HELLINGTON, ST JOHN THE
BAPTIST**
6 miles SE of Norwich off A146

ST MARY'S CHURCH

MOULTON, NORFOLK

by SIMON COTTON

Moulton church has a setting typical of many in East Norfolk, standing a mile by road from its village. It lies next to the moated Manor Hall and the original church on this site was no doubt built by the Hall as a chapel. Moulton derives from 'Mula's tun', meaning homestead or village belonging to Mula.

At the time of the Domesday survey (1086) there was no explicit mention of a church in Moulton, but as Domesday was largely a record of property, this is not conclusive. Apart from the round tower, the earliest datable part of the church is early 13th century. Some work was carried out in the 14th century, including the fine wall paintings. About the beginning of the 16th century, the church received a major renovation with a new roof, screen and porch, the evidence for which is to be found in two wills of 1513 and 1523. The early 17th century saw certain interior furnishings provided, whilst the east end of the chancel was rebuilt in the 18th century. Subsequent alterations have included replacing a thatched by a slate roof in 1842. In 1901 the nave roof was tiled, the floors were relaid and the building was reseated. The chancel was substantially repaired in 1950.

St Mary's was vested in the care of The Churches Conservation Trust in October 1980, and repairs were subsequently carried out under the direction of architects, the late Keith Darby and latterly Neil Birdsall RIBA.

EXTERIOR

The round tower is one of some 120 in Norfolk, the majority being in this area. It is believed that their shape was dictated by the shortage of native building stone for corner quoins. The west window is a blocked 15th century insertion; higher up there is a wooden-framed window on the north side, and on the south side is an opening with rather crudely formed jambs. There are putlog holes (which supported the horizontal poles of

scaffolding during building work) in the tower and nave walls, which suggest that these parts are contemporary or at least that the tower was rebuilt along with the building of the nave. The conical tiled cap is a later addition. There is one bell, from the Norwich foundry, dating from c.1400.

The nave and chancel may themselves have been built at the same time, the walls being continuous with no chancel arch to separate them. The windows in the north wall of the nave are of the 13th–15th centuries, including a lancet and one with Y-tracery. There is also a blocked north doorway.

The chancel has more early 13th century windows on the north side and a former priest's doorway on the south side. The two south windows have wooden Y-tracery in the best traditions of 'Churchwarden's Gothic' and presumably date from the same time as the rebuilding of the east end in brick. The glass contains the arms of Thomas Anguish, the family which provided patrons of the living in the 17th and 18th centuries. Thomas died aged 60 in 1785.

The south wall of the nave has early 14th century Y-traceried and 15th century Perpendicular windows. The brick porch is an early 16th century addition; it has a small mass dial on its south west corner; later additions and alterations have replaced the roof, blocked the windows and given it a pammetted floor. There is a niche for a statue over the entrance. Inside the porch is another mass dial to the right of the door (predating the porch). The inner doorway still has a mediaeval wooden door.

INTERIOR

By the south door is a holy water stoup. The font dates from the early 13th century and is contemporary with the rebuilding that provided the nave and chancel with lancet windows (cf. Beighton, Limpenhoe and Filby). The octagonal bowl is of Purbeck marble and has two pointed arches on each face; it is supported by a central pillar surrounded by a cluster of eight shafts.

The Lord's Prayer, Ten Commandments and Creed hanging over the tower arch date from the 17th century. Originally they were probably behind the altar as a post-Reformation retable. They may be contemporary with the pulpit and altar rails. The chest bears the date April 4th 1694.

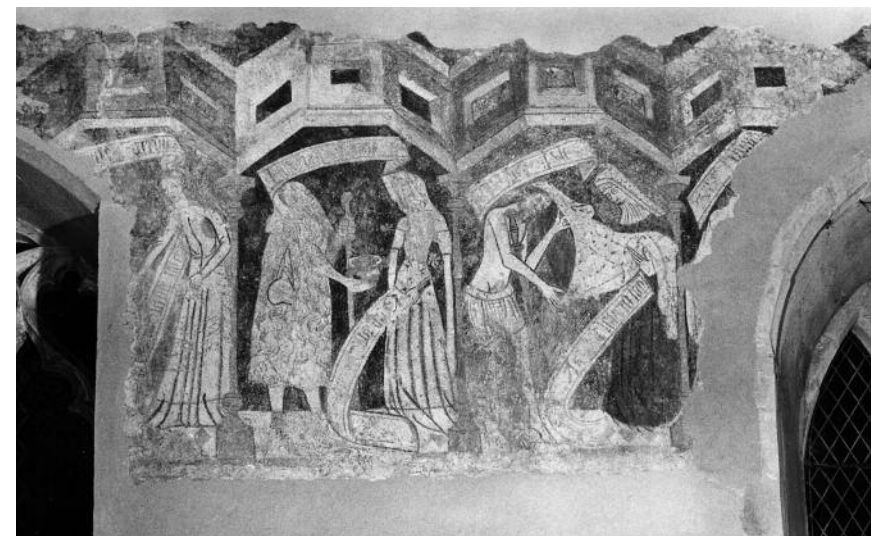
The nave was re-roofed under a faculty of 1901. At the same time the

floor at the western end of the nave was tiled (ledger slabs remaining elsewhere), new pitch-pine pews were fitted, certain repairs were made to the nave walls (which resulted in the uncovering of the wall paintings), the tower floors were repaired and a new window was provided, at a total cost of £1,200.

The wall paintings are the most important feature of the church. On the north wall facing the south door is a twelve-foot-tall representation of St Christopher, patron saint of travellers, of the early 14th century. Notable are the damaged red inscribed scrolls, background buildings with diamond-paned windows, watching spectators and a hermit. There are traces of several fish in the river. A large circle cut into the plaster near the bottom left-hand corner is probably the remains of a consecration cross. There were twelve of these round the walls of the nave and chancel, each of which was anointed with holy oil when the rebuilt church was rededicated.

The 14th century paintings on the south wall showed the Seven Works of Mercy. From the east they depict:

- Feeding the Hungry or giving drink to the Thirsty.
- Clothing the Naked.



Receiving the Stranger or Feeding the Hungry – a female figure is shown

(CHRISTOPHER DALTON)



Christ blessing and the Burying of the Dead

(CHRISTOPHER DALTON)

Window insertions have destroyed some scenes. Five remain, including a figure of Christ blessing, and the Burying of the Dead.

Visitors to Moulton should make the two-mile journey to the south-east to see the fine of wall paintings at Wickhampton, one of the best in existence. Another exceptional wall painting about 4 miles to the north-west is the St Christopher in Hemblington church.

The stained glass window on the north side of the nave was inserted under a faculty of 1915. The fine oak pulpit, complete with head and sounding-board is 17th century. At Bishop Scambler's visitation in 1593 it was reported that at Moulton 'they have no pulpit in the churche' and the parish was ordered to provide one by the following February 5th. It is tempting to suppose that the present pulpit is the one referred to, but its style seems just a little too late. The matching prayer desk is dated 1619.

There is no chancel arch (a fact which supports the view that the nave and chancel were contemporary); the position of the rood-screen between nave and chancel is however indicated by the brick stairs (that formerly led to the loft above the screen) on the south side of the nave. The piscina set into the brickwork indicates the position of a former altar above the screen.

There are three brass inscriptions in the floor of the nave:

John Holler (d.1505) and his wife, Catherine; Henry Palmer (d.1525); Anne Underwode (d.1535); and a kneeling effigy and inscription to Thomasine Palmer (d.1544). This brass, which has recently been returned to the church, is a palimpsest, having been cut from a Flemish brass of a lady engraved in c.1500.

The sloping walls of the chancel are evidently unrestored mediaeval work. The ceiling has a plaster covering originally dating from the 18th century rebuilding, but much renewed in plasterboard in 1950–51. Ledger slabs commemorate members of the Anguish family. The finest monument in the church is that on the south wall to Edmond (d.1616), Richard (d.1626) and Abraha Anguish, wife of Richard (d.1627), which bears an inscription recording its erection by Edmond, Richard's son, in August 1628. It is a good example of the contemporary style, constructed in alabaster and representing Richard and Abraha facing each other across a prayer desk, accompanied by a son and daughter. Above them all is a bust of Edmond senior.

The altar rails may be contemporary with the pulpit. Other woodwork of this period is incorporated in the choir stalls.

The sill of the window on the north side of the chancel is dropped, probably to receive an Easter Sepulchre, where the Blessed Sacrament was ceremonially enthroned from Maundy Thursday to Easter Sunday and watched by parishioners in a vigil of prayer. The double piscina opposite in the south wall dates from about 1300. It features separate drains for the ablutions of the priest's hands and the communion vessels.

The east window, renewed in 1901, includes a panel of glass with the arms of Thomas Anguish (d.1785).

One memorial, of uncertain date but probably 14th century, is the sepulchral slab in the floor before the Easter sepulchre on the north side. Similar remains are to be found on the nave floor at the west end.

Front cover: Exterior from the south-west (CHRISTOPHER DALTON).

Back cover: Nave looking west in 1951 (ROYAL COMMISSION ON THE HISTORICAL MONUMENTS OF ENGLAND).

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