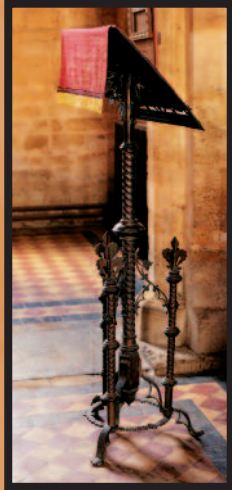




THE CHURCHES  
CONSERVATION TRUST

# CHURCH OF ALL SAINTS

Holdenby,  
Northamptonshire



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CONSERVATION TRUST

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*Holdenby, Northamptonshire*

# CHURCH OF ALL SAINTS

*by Christopher Dalton (Church and architectural historian, writer on buildings and bells, architectural photographer and lay canon of Hereford Cathedral)*

## HISTORY

The name Holdenby dates back to the time of Scandinavian settlements and derives from the personal name 'Halfdan' (or Haldane) and the word 'by' meaning farm. The place is mentioned in Domesday Book (1086) and is first recorded as having a rector about 1222. Today there is scarcely any sign of houses near the church, the village having been removed when Holdenby House, Sir Christopher Hatton's great mansion, was completed in 1583. Sir Christopher, grandson of Elizabeth – the Holdenby family heiress – and Henry Hatton, was born here in 1540 and rose to become Lord Chancellor. After the Civil War his mansion was largely demolished and the present house dates mostly from 1873–88. From Hatton's building there remain three impressive archways, one of which was rebuilt in 1659.

*Front cover: The chancel looking east  
(Clifford Knowles)*

*Left: The screen from the west  
(Clifford Knowles)*



*Exterior from the south-east before the restoration of 1867–68 (photograph by kind permission of the County Archivist of Northamptonshire)*

## EXTERIOR

The church stands below the gardens of Holdenby House and half a mile (0.8 km) down a green (and often muddy) lane from the present village, which now has a population of only about 40. In July 1972 the parishes of Holdenby and East Haddon were united and All Saints' church was declared redundant. In 1973 it was vested in the Redundant Churches Fund (now The Churches Conservation Trust). Since 1972 repairs have been carried out under the supervision first of Mr Victor Farrar of

Bedford and, more recently, Mr Peter McFarlane of Grantham. Occasional services are still held. Consisting of chancel, nave, north and south aisles, south porch and western tower, much of the church clearly dates from the first half of the 14th century. There are fine gabled buttresses of this period and the buttress south-east of the tower is topped by a large carved beast, now sadly eroded. The upper part of the embattled, three-stage, tower is a modest but good example of 15th-century work; the north aisle



*Exterior from the south-east after the restoration of 1867–68 (© Crown copyright. NMR.)*

was altered and its roof raised at the same period. In 1843–45 the chancel was rebuilt to the designs of Sir Henry Dryden of Canons Ashby, who was an amateur architect. In 1867–68 the church was much restored, the nave and south aisles were given new high-pitched roofs, most of the window tracery and both doors were renewed and the present porch was built. The architect was Sir George Gilbert Scott and the builder John Thompson of Peterborough. Finally, in 1874, a small organ

chamber was added to the chancel, the architects being E F Law and Sons of Northampton.

The whole church is built of the local ironstone which has a rich yellow-brown colour. The roofs, apart from the slated roof of the north aisle, are steeply pitched and covered with tiles, those on the chancel being of the 'fish-scale' pattern favoured by Dryden and used on many buildings round Canons Ashby. The benchmark on the tower is some 393 feet (120 metres) above sea level.



*Below: The north arcade from the south-west (Clifford Knowles)*

*Right: The south-west corner and font (Clifford Knowles)*

*Below right: One of the painted texts in the south-west corner (Clifford Knowles)*

## INTERIOR

Inside, the church has an impressive dignity enhanced by the proportions of the nave arcades and the great breadth and height of the south aisle.

The 14th-century arcades are of three bays with octagonal piers, double chamfered arches and many carved heads.

The north aisle is narrow with a lean-to roof. This was raised in the 15th century, so that the three small quatrefoiled clerestory windows now open into the aisle.

In the nave and aisles are seven painted texts with strapwork surrounds, on plaster, which are probably Elizabethan in date as the texts are from the 'Bishop's Bible' of 1568. They were discovered and repainted in 1862 and the Lord's Prayer, Creed and Ten Commandments, painted on zinc sheets, were added subsequently. Apart from these texts the walls were stripped of plaster during the 1867–68 restoration.

Over the south door is a painting of the royal arms of King George I.



The octagonal font, the sides of its bowl carved with the four emblems of Christ's Passion alternating with the emblems of SS Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, was designed by E F Law and Sons in 1873. It incorporates part of its predecessor; but much of the old font was, it is said, broken up and buried underneath. The tall, late-Victorian wooden font cover was designed by the Revd Frederick Heathcote Sutton of Brant Broughton, Lincolnshire, and made by Rattee of Cambridge.

In the floor at the east end of the south aisle is an incised alabaster memorial slab to William Holdenby, who died in 1490, and his wife Margaret. There are also a late-13th-century coffin lid and two memorial slabs of Purbeck marble with brass inscriptions. One of these is said to have been a former altar slab, reused as a memorial to Elizabeth Hatton, heiress of the Holdenbys. The arched recess formerly contained a wooden effigy, thought to have been of Richard Holdenby, the probable builder of the greater part of the church c. 1330–40.

Nearby is a fine vaulted piscina: old wills show that the south aisle formerly included a Lady Chapel. There are two further brass memorial inscriptions in the nave and other slabs in the floors of the nave and aisles.

Much of the stained glass in the church is by Clayton and Bell, namely the east windows in the chancel depicting Christ in glory at the top and the Annunciation, Crucifixion and Ascension below, the east window in the north aisle (1870) and the west window of the south aisle (1871). The south-east window of the aisle, dated 1887 and portraying SS Anna, Simeon and Joseph, is by Heaton and Butler, and the west window of the tower by Powell c. 1871.





*The choir stalls and screen (Clifford Knowles)*

The oak pulpit dates from the 18th century but was altered in 1863. The metal lectern and the wheeled coffin bier (or carriage) are good Victorian examples. A leatherbound bible is dated 1827 and a fine later Bible was given by Sarah Spencer in 1875. There is a noteworthy wooden arms box carved with pomegranates. The pedigree of the Holdenby family was renewed in 1981 by Mr Patrick Cork and the Hatton coat of arms hangs in front of the east window of the south aisle.

In the tower are two bells, the larger weighing some 17 cwt (864kg), cast in 1719 by Abraham Rudhall II of Gloucester and hanging in an oak frame of earlier origin. A number of medieval patterned floor tiles have been gathered together in the tower base; the floor tiling throughout the church is otherwise 19th century.

About 1700 what had been part of the magnificent hall screen in Holdenby House was brought into the church and installed in the

chancel arch. A plan of the house by John Thorpe, now preserved in the Soane Museum, confirms this origin. The pair of Roman soldiers flanking the cross on top belongs to the screen but the cross itself dates from 1867–68 when the upper part of the screen, with lions and other carving, was removed to the tower arch. The two parts of the screen were, however, reunited in 1986. Other woodwork from Holdenby House was used first in a family pew and then in 1913 and afterwards to make up the reredos and circular First World War memorial.

In 1843–45 the chancel was rebuilt in the Early English style at the expense of the rector, the Revd J L Crawley. It contains a fine set of stalls with simple misericords, 15th century in origin but restored and rearranged in 1845. The brass candlesticks on the stalls (not normally kept in the church) date from the reign of King Charles II and were formerly in Lincoln Cathedral. The sanctuary chair is said to be French. The painting of the chancel walls, including the angels flanking



*The organ on the north side of the chancel (Clifford Knowles)*

the upper east window, was executed by Lea of Lutterworth in 1868 and the reredos behind the present wooden one was painted with the heads of the four evangelists by The Revd Frederick Sutton at the same time. In front of the south-west window hangs a fragment of early-14th-century glass representing the Coronation of the Virgin Mary. The organ, having two manuals and pedals, was built by Wordsworth and Maskell of Leeds in 1875 and enlarged in 1882.

The registers date from 1754 (marriages) and 1795 (baptisms and burials) and there are churchwardens' accounts dating from 1730. All these documents are now kept in the Northamptonshire County Record Office.

The communion plate consists of an Elizabethan cup and cover paten dated 1570, a bread-holder of 1718 and a flagon of 1720. These items are now kept at the treasury in Peterborough Cathedral.

The churchyard, which is still in the care of the parish and not vested in The Churches Conservation Trust, is notable for its clipped yews, spring flowers and beautiful views over the surrounding countryside which is utterly peaceful and unspoilt. The wall surrounding the churchyard contains a quantity of stones from the old Holdenby House. To the north of the church is a large grave for members of the Hartshorne family, a number of whom were noted antiquaries.

#### PRINCIPAL SOURCES

Hartshorne, A 1908. *Holdenby*.

Three volumes of manuscript notes etc. on the history of Holdenby compiled by the Revd D W Barrett c.1917.

Other material in the Northamptonshire County Record Office.

# 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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