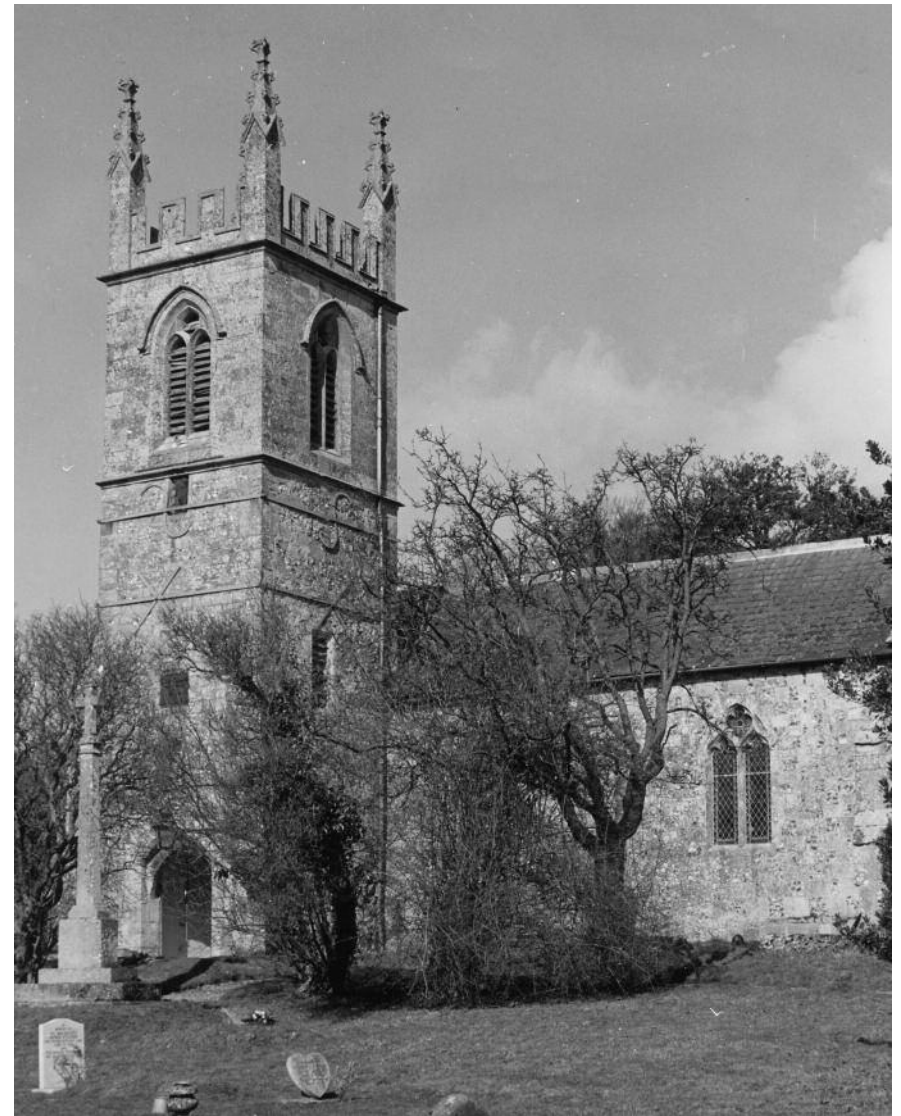




ST NICHOLAS' CHURCH

FISHERTON DELAMERE
WILTSHIRE



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 NICHOLAS' CHURCH
FISHERTON DELAMERE, WILTSHIRE

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 320 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:

BERWICK ST LEONARD, ST LEONARD **STRATFORD TONY, ST MARY &
ST LAWRENCE**
13 miles W of Salisbury on B3089 4 miles SW of Salisbury off A354

MADDINGTON, ST MARY
11 miles NW of Salisbury off A360 **SUTTON VENY, ST LEONARD
OLD CHURCH**

ORCHESTON, ST GEORGE
12 miles NW of Salisbury off A360 3 miles SE of Warminster off B3095

ROLLESTONE, ST ANDREW
10 miles NW of Salisbury off A360 **WILTON, ST MARY OLD CHURCH**
3 miles W of Salisbury on A30

ST NICHOLAS' CHURCH

FISHERTON DELAMERE, WILTSHIRE

by ANTHONY BARNES AND CHRISTOPHER DALTON

The first recorded mention of Fisherton, meaning fishermen's village, is in *Domesday Book* in 1086. The connection with the de la Mere family, who gave their name to the village to distinguish it from Fisherton Anger just outside Salisbury, did not begin until the 14th century. These two dates encompass the early history of the church. There are the remains of Norman work in the building, including several stones carved with chevron and nail-head ornament and clearly part of a former arch, now built into the nave wall to the east of the tower. Also Norman are the simple round font, and the responds with twin shafts and carved capitals below the chancel arch. The arch itself is 13th century as, in its origin, is the dignified chancel with its lancet windows and stone corbel-table.

What is unusual about the church is its history since 1800. It was drawn, as were many Wiltshire churches, by John Buckler in the early years of the 19th century. His original drawings are now in the British Library but reproductions of them hang in the church. They show how careful subsequent restorers were to retain as much as possible of the look, as well as the material, of the mediaeval building. The most significant alteration externally was the replacement of the plain wooden belfry, clad in weather-boarding, with the present top section of the tower built in stone. This change dates from the restoration of 1833, commemorated by an iron plaque set into a blocked window-opening. The work was carried out at the instigation of John Davis, who had bought the manor from the Duke of Somerset in 1803. The nave and north transept were rebuilt at this time, incorporating the Norman remains mentioned above and much of the stonework of four late-14th century windows in the nave. The west gallery and the plastered ceilings of the nave and transept were part of the 1833 work, as was the addition of the vestry.

The second restoration took place in 1862, at the expense of a younger John Davis, under the supervision of the surveyor W Hardwick of



The chancel looking east

(ROYAL COMMISSION ON THE HISTORICAL MONUMENTS OF ENGLAND)

Warminster. This period of work is reflected in the 13th century chancel, where lancet windows replaced some rather broader and later windows shown in the Buckler drawings – no doubt an attempt to recreate the original design. However, the east windows and those on the north side have kept their original rear-arches inside and these are beautifully moulded.

The third restoration, in 1912, was intended to enhance the atmosphere of the chancel as the particularly holy place. For this Athelstan Riley, patron of the living, prominent high churchman, and author or translator of several hymns (including 'Ye watchers and ye holy ones'), commissioned the versatile architect F C Eden to design the carved oak rood-screen with



The church from the south-west (from a 19th century drawing by John Buckler)

loft which now separates nave from chancel. Eden also gave the 1833 west gallery a new front, with latticed panels, and provided the present attractive pews in the nave, with their open backs and linenfold-carved ends each with one knob. His screen and loft are in a style clearly derived from surviving 15th century English and Welsh examples. They were intended to be painted but this was never done, chiefly because of their unpopularity with the parishioners who were at one stage ready to see them go to another church. While they cut the church into two in a way which would make present-day worship difficult, to the visitor they form a work of great elegance which can be enjoyed for its own sake.

The church is not large, consisting of a broad nave with north transept, chancel with north vestry, and south tower. The walls are built of local stone and flint, mostly in a distinctive chequered pattern. As with several other churches in this area, the tower also serves as a porch. John Davis's belfry of 1833 has large windows, battlements and tall crocketed pinnacles. All this put a considerable extra load on the mediaeval tower walls which had to be reinforced with iron ties and braces.



The chancel looking west

(RCHME)

The pulpit is Jacobean and was introduced at the time of Eden's work: it is said to have come from East Anglia. The corona in the chancel is Victorian, as are the oak altar, which was given by Bishop Wordsworth of Salisbury, and most of the stalls. The return stalls adjoining the screen, however, are part of F C Eden's work. The stained glass in the chancel, helping to give it the subdued religious light beloved of the Victorians and which contrasts so effectively with the brightness of the nave, dates from 1862. This glass is mostly patterned (grisaille) but the east windows contain depictions of the Last Supper and Christ with the children.

The Alpha and Omega symbols in the top of the west window of the nave are early Victorian. The later patterned glass in the south windows was provided by the Birch family. Mounted on the south wall are the royal arms of George III, and framed wooden panels with the Lord's Prayer, Ten Commandments and Creed no doubt dating from 1833 and formerly behind the altar. Photographs show the chalice and paten of 1631 which formerly belonged to Fisherton church. There are now four bells in the tower, a fifth having been removed to nearby Wylde church in 1975 to make a ring of six there. Two of them were cast by James Burrough of Devizes in 1745 and the others by Charles and George Mears of Whitechapel in 1844. The organ is now in use in Piddlehinton church in Dorset.

There are a number of monuments on the walls, the most moving (on the north side of the nave) being to two babies, who are depicted in their beds, of Thomas and Joan Crockford. Thomas was vicar here from 1613 to 1634. Other monuments are mostly to members of the Davis family.

In 1783, 16 people were recorded as attending the three communion services which were held in the year. In 1851 there were 85 present at the morning service and 102 in the evening. By the end of the 19th century numbers had dwindled and the community had become much smaller, a process which continued during the 20th century. In 1982 the church was declared pastorally redundant and in 1984 it was vested in the Redundant Churches Fund, now The Churches Conservation Trust. St Mary's church, Wylde, is now the parish church.

Fisherton Delamere lies just off the busy A36 Southampton to Bath road, not far from its intersection with the even busier A303 London to Exeter road. It is, however, a calm and delightful village with a green, set on a south-facing slope just above the River Wylde.



The chancel from the south

(RCHME)

Front cover: The church from the south (NEIL SKELTON).

Back cover: The nave looking east (NEIL SKELTON).

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