



About St Bartholomew's

The church of St Bartholomew was situated in the village of Furtho, now one of Northamptonshire's deserted villages. Today only the church, built of local limestone, and the 15th-century dovecote remain. The original manor house stood roughly west of the church and north of the dovecote. The place name was spelt Forho in Domesday Book (1086), later Fordho and finally, by 1254, Fortho. It means a ford by a ridge of land. In the early 13th century the de Fortho family resided in the manor house.

The chancel, dating to the 13th century and the oldest part of the church, would have been maintained by the rector, while the nave and tower would have been the responsibility of the parishioners and, in particular, the Lord of the Manor. The east window was installed around 1330, while the south chancel windows are of the period 1350-1450.

The nave and tower were rebuilt by Edward Furtho during the reign of James I, about 1620, in a period celebrated for carved woodwork, but when church building was rare. Structures remaining from this date include the tower and nave walls, roofs and windows, and north and south nave doors. The north doorway is now blocked, but part of the door is visible from outside the church.

In 1870 the church was restored; this included the installation of a new pulpit and lectern, and the removal of the box pews. This was probably when the plaster on the inside walls was removed.

Having been unused for regular services since 1921, St Bartholomew's was vested in the Churches Conservation Trust in June 1990. During 1991-92 extensive repairs were undertaken, giving the church a new lease of life.

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Access

Due to their age, historic church floors can be uneven and worn, and lighting can be low level. Please take care, especially in wet weather when floors can be slippery.

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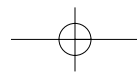
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your church tour

Church of
St Bartholomew
Furtho, Northamptonshire



THE CHURCHES
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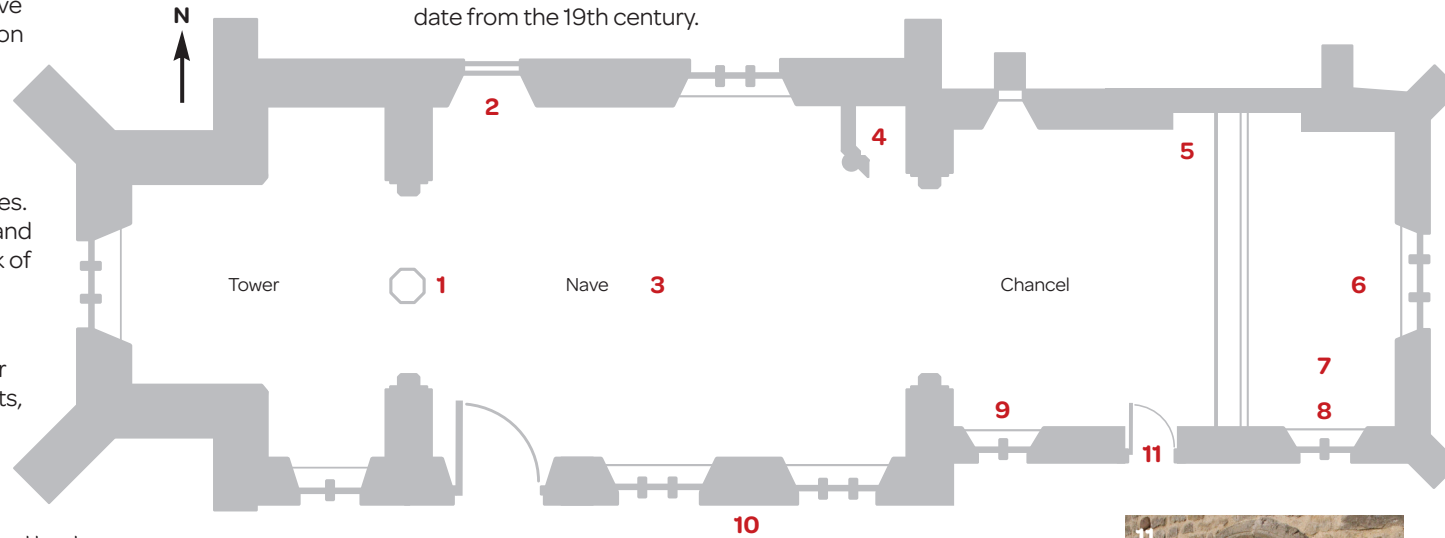
1 The octagonal **font** of c. 1620, a basin filled with water used for baptisms, and its wooden octagonal cover echo the shape of the columns of the chancel and tower arches.



2 The **doorway** in the north wall has been blocked up. Doors in the north wall of a church are sometimes called 'devil's doors' and are frequently blocked up, although originally they would have been used during the consecration of the church and during baptisms to 'allow the devil to leave' the building and the child.

3 The **nave** is the area where the congregation gathered for services. All the ceiling beams are carved and shaped. This is typical woodwork of the Jacobean period, when the ceiling was installed (c. 1620).

The **windows**, divided into two or three smaller sections called lights, are typical of the period of rebuilding (c. 1620). The glass was all broken by an enemy bomb during World War 2. During the war the church was used by the Northamptonshire Records Society for storage.



6 The 19th-century **altar** table came from All Saints' Church, Little Wenham, Suffolk in 1993. On the wall behind the altar are two stone corbels (brackets) that probably supported statues of saints. This area is lit by the east window with its fine reticulated tracery (net-like stonework). This is typical of the Perpendicular style of architecture common at the time of building in the late 14th to early 15th century. The lectern and simple communion rail date from the 19th century.



9 Below the **sanctus bell window** in the south wall of the chancel, is a seat and a blocked window, which would have been shuttered rather than glazed, to allow the sanctus bell to be rung at the height of the Mass by someone sitting on the seat. This let the workers in the field know when to pause for a moment and join in the prayers. The blocked window opposite in the north wall may have served the same purpose.



In some churches similar windows are identified as 'lepers' windows', believed to be where the sick could observe the Mass without coming into contact with the congregation. However, the angle of these windows shows this is clearly not the case, as you cannot see the altar by looking through the opening.



4 The **pulpit** of c. 1870 is made from Bath stone with a red marble column.

5 The **arched recess** was for a tomb, and formerly contained a slab and brass effigies of a man, his two wives, an inscription and four shields. It probably commemorated one of the de Furtho lords of the manor, but had disappeared by 1791.

7 The inscription on the stone **ledger slab** in the floor next to the altar reads:

'Hic Jacet Edmundus Arnold Arm. Quodam Dominus (Sub Deo) Hujus Manerii. Qui Obiit 27 Marti 1676' ('Here lies Edmund Arnold, Knight, once Lord (under God) of this Manor. Who died 27 March 1676').

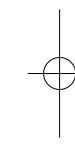
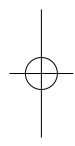


8 The **piscina**, a basin for the priest to wash his hands before and after the Mass, dates from the early 14th century. The recess is decoratively shaped, enclosing a scalloped bowl.

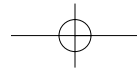


10 High on the south parapet of the nave is a small **shield**, which once displayed a coat of arms, probably that of Edward Furtho who rebuilt the nave in c. 1620.

11 Outside the church above the **priest's door** to the chancel is a hood-mould. A hood-mould is a stone structure designed to protect the door from rainwater running down the church walls. Here it has a carved stone face on either end. While the door itself has probably been replaced, the stonework is likely to date from the 14th to 15th century.



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