

Chapter 12

Sutton Church

A Compilation and Updating of Original Documents

Introduction

For such a small and simple church there is much to fascinate, but any visitor to Sutton's ancient church would be well advised to leave his Pevsner [1] behind. Pevsner, normally so reliable, has got Sutton wrong, very wrong. The bellcote is not 13th century - the present single bellcote is c 1930 and replaced the original double bellcote seen in Figure 12b. The *'fine Norman chancel arch'* regrettably is not Norman - it dates from the 1867 rebuild, and, according to the Victoria County History [2], replaced a *'plastered partition standing on a wooden beam'*. Pevsner also records a *'recumbent lion, Norman. The back shows this carried a shaft originally. It was thus probably connected with a portal of the type of the Prior's Door at Ely'*. However, Wright's directory of Northants published in 1884 states *'along the wall of the South aisle is a stone bench terminating in the figure of a lion, with a monster on its back'*. Certainly the four holes in the lion's body have been cut to take horizontal and not vertical shafts, and the lion (fig 12c) resembles the *Frith (Sanctuary) Stool* at Sprotborough church, Yorks. I must also take issue with Pevsner's *'little of interest externally'* and prefer Arthur Mee [3] who writes of *'a little Norman church with tall lime trees lining a narrow lane on one side, and the low walls and dark stone roofs of a farm bordering the churchyard on the other. Two terrifying gargoyles on the church wall have been looking Northwards for centuries, and many heads keep them company on the mouldings of the windows'* (Figs 12d & 12m). Mind you, he also suggests the lion may have been the side post of a flight of steps. I personally favour Wright.

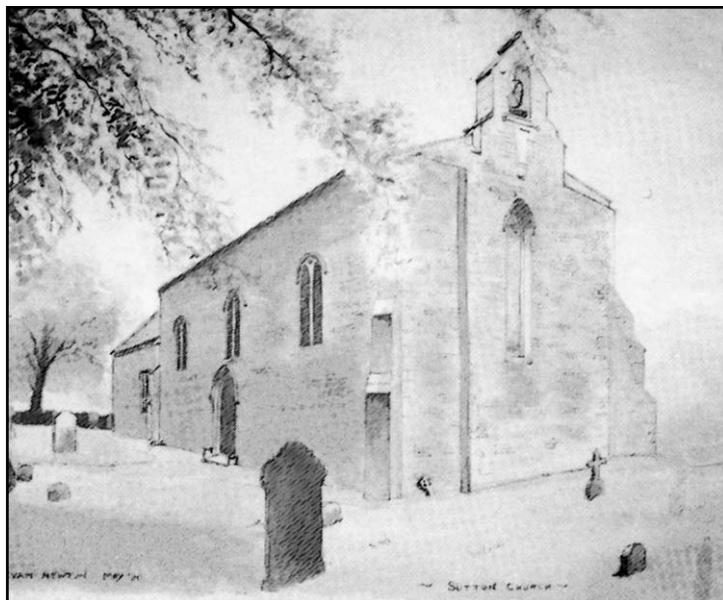


Fig 12a. Sutton Church today.



Fig 12b. Sutton Church with its twin bellcote c 1900.



Fig 12c. Norman carving of recumbent lion. Is it a bench end (Wright 1884), sidepost of a flight of steps (Mee 1945) or part of a portal? (Pevsner 1968)



Fig 12d. Two terrifying gargoyles on the church wall.

Also of external interest is the Saxon carved stone, possibly originally the shaft of a churchyard cross, built into the dovecote which forms part of the South wall of the churchyard; and also the two scratch dials on the South East wall of the chapel (Fig 12n).

Description of the Building

The small church of St Michael and All Angels, Sutton, was built in the 12th century, probably between 1120 and 1130 as a chapelry in Castor Parish. It remained a chapel-of-ease to Castor until 1851, when it became an independent parish. In 1903, the parish was united with that of Upton. It again now shares its parish priest with Castor. The right of patronage is shared between Sir Philip Naylor-Leyland Bt of Milton, and Mrs Verity Gunnery, a descendant of the Rev William Hopkinson, a former Lord of the Manor and incumbent of Sutton.



Fig 12e. Carved bracket corbel and 13th century trefoil arch piscina.



Fig 12f. Carvings on the chancel arch capitals – almost certainly by the same hand as those at Castor.



Fig 12g. The base of the chancel arch columns – similar carvings are on the base of columns at

The Chancel

The only surviving features from the 12th century are the responds and columns of the chancel arch. In the 13th century the chancel was enlarged and a South chapel added. These were largely rebuilt in 1867-8; A Sykes was the architect. The East window above the altar dates from this restoration. In the North wall of the chancel is a small single-light 14th century window, and an internally rebated 15th century two-light window with transom. In the South wall of the chancel there is a 13th century *piscina* under a trefoil arch (Fig 12e), and higher in the wall, an arch, possibly late 13th century, was cut straight through the wall opening into the South chapel. This is similar in date and style to the arch cut in the South wall of the chancel in Castor Church. There is a further arch, semi-circular, with octagonal responds, cut in the wall to the West of the first arch, this providing access to the South chapel. The Norman-style chancel arch dates from the 1867 restoration [4], but the original Norman responds and shafts remain. The capitals and footings of the columns, consisting of interlacing scrollwork and ‘elephants’ feet’, are carved in a style similar to those of Castor chancel columns (figs 12f & 12g). In the East wall of the chancel are two stone corbel-style carved brackets with human heads. These probably at one stage supported figures of Our Lady and St Michael or St Giles, for in the 14th century, every church was ordered to place a figure of Mary and one of the parish patron saint either side of the high altar. There was formerly a low stone screen at the entrance to the chancel, this was removed in 1867.

The South Chapel

The South chapel has a Victorian lancet window in the East wall, and two double-lancet windows, early English albeit restored. The arch leading into the South aisle is Victorian. There is a *piscina*, (not too dissimilar to the one now in 4 Clay Lane Castor) in the South wall of the chapel (fig12h). The South chapel, originally a chantry chapel, is now a vestry.

The Nave

The nave is only 34ft 6 ins by 15ft 3ins. The North doorway dates from the first half of the 13th century. In the latter part of the 15th century, the nave walls were raised, and the roof pitch heightened; the clerestory windows on the nave South wall and the three windows in the North wall date from this time, as do the external diagonal buttresses at the West end. The West wall was at some early stage rebuilt and thickened to support a bellcote, but the West window is Victorian. The corbels in the nave must date from the raising of the nave walls in the 15th century. The pews date from the Victorian restoration.

The South Aisle

A South aisle was created at the end of the 12th century by piercing an arcade of two bays with round-top arches with square *abaci* and plain circular bell capitals and shafts. The aisle is shorter than the nave. In its East bay is a square-headed South window, with ogee-headed lights, and in its West bay a square-headed South doorway with zigzag and pellet moulding. To the East of this doorway is the late 12th century recumbent lion sculpture referred to earlier. The aisle West window is Victorian. Exterior corbels suggest that the aisle was originally longer, with the West end being rebuilt in the restoration of 1867.

Font

The octagonal panelled bowl, perhaps 14th century, is supported on a central octagonal shaft and eight smaller shafts with capitals and bases. The panels may be a later addition (Fig 12i).

The Bells and Bellcote

In 1552 the Inventory of church goods noted (as recorded in North's *Church Bells of Northants* 1878) [5]:

*'ffurst in o steple ij smale belles.
Itm in the same a sanct bell.
Itm ij hand bells.'*

In 1878 *'the weight of the present single bell (there is a double bellcot) is 1cwt 2qrs 22lb and which at 1s 5d per lb cost £13 13 2'*. It is inscribed: *'J Warner & Sons London 1867 (Royal Arms) Patent (Diam 20 ins)'*....

'At the Death-knell three tolls are given for a man, two for a woman, one for a child before the knell. Until recently the age of the deceased was tolled out. Until the restoration of the church in 1867, it was customary on the first Sunday when Banns of Marriage were published for some young man of the congregation to rush to the bell-rope at the close of the service and jingle the bell.' [5]

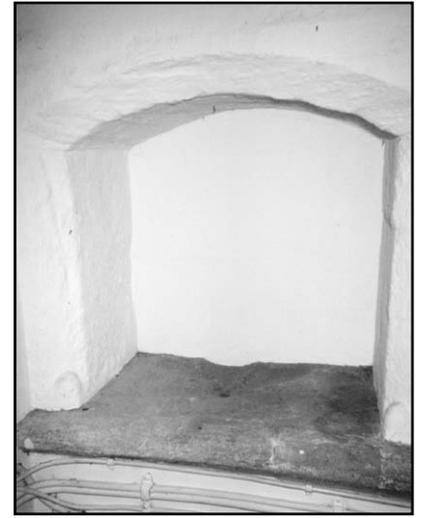


Fig 12h. Piscina in South chapel.



Fig 12i. The font.

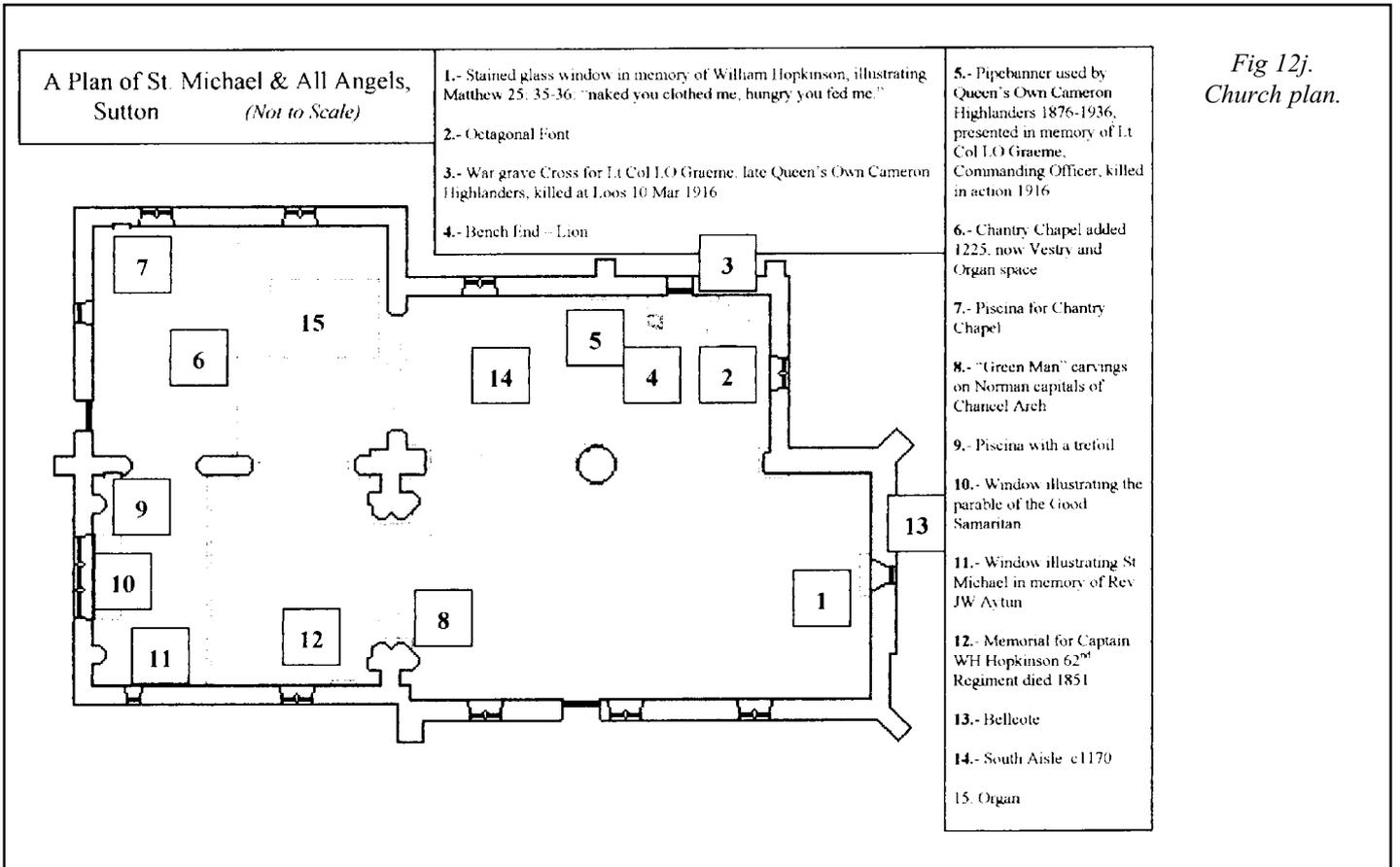


Fig 12j. Church plan.

Kelly's Directory of 1914 records 'a Western turret containing two bells; a new bell was added in 1914 from the proceeds of a bequest by Mrs Murton, widow of a former vicar'. This bell, (the present bell) was cast by Taylors of Loughborough. However, by 1931 Kelly's Directory was recording a single bell, and it appears the present bellcote was rebuilt about this time.

Stained Glass, Monuments and Heraldry

Chancel East window and glass: 1869 the 'Good Samaritan' in memory of William Hopkinson and his daughter.

Chancel North window and glass: a small ogee-headed 14th century light with early 20th century glass of St Michael by Kemp in memory of JW Aytoun 1918.

Nave West window and glass: 19th century stained glass, 1869, illustrating Matthew Ch 25.

South Chapel: a small lancet in the East wall with stained glass in memory of Charles Palmer 1857.

Stained glass in 1791 is described by Bridges [6] as follows:

North window: '1745 the arms of see of Peterborough, the colours different; the field Az and the charge Or'.

South Window: 'A. a chevron Or, surmounted of three piles in point G'.

North Wall

Wall Tablet: William Henry Hopkinson, late Capt 62nd Regt, only son of William Landon Hopkinson, MD d 1851.

Wall Tablet: Elizabeth, wife of William Landon Hopkinson, died 1836; William Landon Hopkinson, died 1876.

South Wall:

Wall Tablet: William Hopkinson, died 1788; wife Elizabeth died 1795. William Hopkinson was born at Upton in 1727, and died in Peterborough. His only son John Hopkinson, BD was Vicar of Morton, Lincs.

South Aisle

Wall Tablet: partially glass fronted: Lieutenant Colonel LO Graeme, CMG, killed at Loos 1916; behind the glass a pipe banner with the regimental emblazon of the 1st Battalion The Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders.

The heraldic arms of the Hopkinsons appear on some of the memorials viz: 'Azure, on a chevron argent, between three estoiles or, three lozenges gules, within a bordure or; Crest: a demy lion rampant sable, incensed gules, first granted to Hopkinson of Alford Lincs, temp Elizabeth I' [7].

Floor Memorials (from Bridges *History of Northamptonshire* 1796) [6]:

George Bunning, sen died 17 July 1727, aged 47

George Bunning, jun died 23 Jan 1736, aged 29

Anne, relict of George Bunning, and late wife of William Hopkinson died 16 Jan 1763

Elizabeth, wife of William Dewberry, died 10 Sept 1782, aged 67

George David Wales died 10 May 1782 aged 35

The reredos behind the altar is in memory of those who fell in the First World War.

Church Plate

From Markham's *Church Plate of Northants* 1894 [8]:

Silver Cup. Weight 4:3. Height 3 ¾ Diam of top 3, of foot 2 ½ Date circa 1650. No marks

This is a perfectly plain little beaker, of rough workmanship. It is almost cylindrical, with slightly hollowed sides; below it has three horizontal mouldings. There is only one other beaker in this County, and that is at the adjoining hamlet of Upton. It is therefore possible that this was made by a local silversmith in the same form as that at Upton.

Silver Plated Flagon. Height 8. diam. Of centre 3 ½. This is plain and uninteresting.

Pewter Plate. Diam 8 ¼. marks: (1) Between two pillars perhaps hare supporting a garb 'Samuel' above – below: (2) Between two pillars a rose crowned, "Made in London"; (3) Snow Hill London in oblong; (4) In four small shields: Lion's head erased; leopard's head crowned; Britannia; SS for Samuel Smith.

Pewter Plate. Diam. 9 ½. Marks: (1) Rose crowned in shaped outline; (2) Eliz Royd in oblong; (3) lion sejant in circle 70 on the dexter side Eliz. (4) In four small shields: Leopard's head; lion rampant to sinister; black-letter E; black-letter R; (5) RB.

The Organ

The organ was made by J Walker in 1855. It was from Waldingfield Church, Suffolk, and was installed at Sutton by Rev William Hopkinson in 1888, and restored in 1961 by the generosity of his daughter, Mrs LO Graeme. Arthur

Mason, who now lives at Castor, used to pump the organ by hand prior to the restoration. He recalls that: *'Provided you kept the barrel full it was not too hard – the trick was to keep the indicator, a lead weight on a string, above head height'*. Nonetheless he does recall looking forward to the sermon! He remembers the restoration when the organ was completely dismantled and laid all over the pews and church floor. There were no services during this work which took about a fortnight. An unusual feature is the early Victorian barrel organ still intact, and of which there are very few examples in existence (Fig 12k).

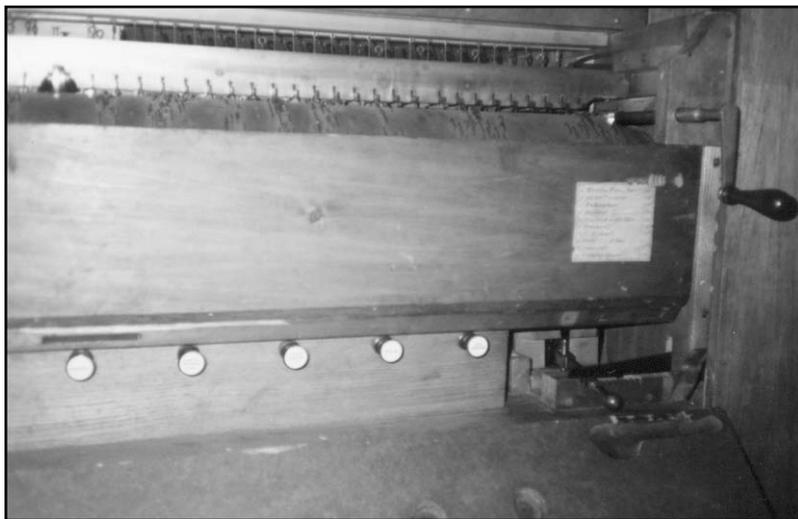


Fig 12k. Barrel organ.

The Registers

Prior to 1758, all records were kept in Castor registers. One book contains marriages from 1758 to 1807, burials from 1763 to 1812, and baptisms from 1770 to 1812. Subsequent registers are:

Baptisms	1813 – current
Marriages	1813 – 1837
Marriages	1837 – current
Burials	1821 – 1830
Burials	1830 – current
Banns	1824 – current

Non-current registers have been lodged at the Northampton County Records Office.

Episcopal Visitation 1570

Bishop Edmund Scamler made an Episcopal Visitation in 1570 [9]. Such visitations reported not only on the condition of the church fabric and conduct of the priest, but also the behaviour of parishioners as well.

Helpston. *'Ther church is out of repara.'*

Peakirk cum Glinton. *'The parsonage is fallen in decae by the faut of Mr Wynwyrt.'*

Ufford. *'They had but on sermon this tow yere.'*

Stamford St Martin's. *'Edward Bele and Wilson be comon drunkerds and blasphemous of God's Word.'*

Thornhaugh. *'Thomas Baker and his wife dyd not comunicate at Ester last.'*

Werrington. *'Dor Toone impregnata est a quo ignoratur sed illa cum John Hewson vulgariter consociatur.'*

(Dor Toone is pregnant, by whom nobody is sure but rumour has it that John Hewson is responsible – sexual peccadillos were invariably reported in Latin!)

However at:

Upton cum Sutton. *'All is well.'*

Bequests

Recorded by J Fysher 1545 and reported in the Archaeological Journal 1913 [10]:

Sutton St Giles (chapel to Castre) to the sepulchre light - xii d. (twelve pence)

Maintenance to the chapel of Saint Giles in Sutton - iij l iij s iij d. (three pounds three shillings and fourpence)

+Thomas Mosse of Upton d.1528 iij s iij d. (three shillings and fourpence)

To Sutton Chappell - a seme of barle (a measure of barley)

Recorded 1734. Robert Wright gave town lands to Sutton chapelry producing £9. 15s. 0d. for the poor.

Parish Meeting Minutes [11]:

1898 *'Mrs Mary Elizabeth Tobin, late of Weston-super-Mare, widow deceased, bequeathed a sum of £50 in 2¼% consols to the Rector, Incumbent, Churchwardens and Overseers for the time being of the parish upon trust to apply the dividends of income thereof in maintaining the tomb of her late father and mother, the surplus of such dividends to be distributed in their discretion amongst such of the poor of the parish of Sutton and in such manner as they should think fit.'*

1904. Hopkinson's charity. £200 in India 2½ % estimated to realize £6 p.a. to be used for relief of agricultural workers or their widows resident in the parish.

Restoration of the Chancel, South Chapel and South Aisle

The Vestry Book of 1865 records a decision to restore the church at a cost of £500. Measures were taken to raise a mortgage on the rates for ten years of £125. About the same time the Stamford and Essendine Railway Company, following upon a bill passed by Parliament on 25th July 1861, held a meeting of all parties entitled to commonable rights. The railway company paid £404 15s 0d for the extinction of all common and other rights for the railway to pass through Sutton. This money was used for the restoration of the church. Further contributions were as follows:

Lords of the Manor	£139 18s 0d
Rev W Murton (Curate for 40 years)	£20 0s 0d
Sale of work	£57 2s 4d
Collection from the opening service	£47 7s 3d

With other unrecorded contributions a total of £821 3s 4d was collected. The cost of the restoration was £820 18s 9½ d. Note – to make good the chancel roof only, in 1990, cost £13000! The restoration was carried out under the direction of Mr Sykes of Melton. The chancel and South Chapel were in great measure rebuilt, some of the old features being reused.

Church Life in the 1950s

The church played an important part in the life of Sexton, Charlie Favell. He was also in the choir, along with eight or so others, including Steve Britten, Rosalie Britten and Sheila Crane, Charlie's daughter. The men wore surplices. Mrs Graeme played the organ. The vicar was also the vicar of Upton, so they had alternate services with Upton: one week a morning service at Sutton and the next week an evening service at Sutton. The morning service was Mattins, followed by Holy Communion for those who wanted to stay for it. The evening service was Prayer Book Evensong. If some-one was not present for church, Mrs Graeme would send for them, and the service would not start until the missing person had arrived.

Every year on Good Friday the choir would walk to Sutton Wood, near the Southorpe Road, to pick primroses to decorate the church. At Christmas they would go carol singing round the village, and would call at the Grange, where



Fig 12l. St Michael's Church, Sutton c 1902 - only the lighting and heating have changed.

they went in to sing for Mrs Graeme. There would be choir outings, for example to Cheddar Gorge, or Matlock - long journeys but they always returned the same day. The trip was free for members of the choir. Other people in the village could also go if they paid for their fare.

The priests at that time were Mr Hasler, then Mr Beeny, Mr Matthews who rode to church on a bicycle, Canon Turner, Adrian Davies (also Rector of Castor and Marholm,) and then Mr Herbert, who was also an industrial chaplain. They all lived in the Vicarage at Upton (apart from Adrian Davies) – now known as Glebe House. Charlie Favell never went on holiday, never stayed out of the village. He loved the church and his garden. On New Year's Eve, he would go up to the church,

and toll out the Old Year and ring in the New Year, and then call in at Church Cottage for a whisky. He would light the coke fire in church at Saturday tea-time, and then, at midnight, go up to the church to stoke the fire so it was ready for Sunday. He had a beautiful singing voice. His wife used to clean the church on Friday afternoons. If a lay-reader came to take a service, Charlie would always ask him in for tea. He died 11th April 1984 aged 79. His daughter, Sheila, born in the village, is the last of the original villagers in Sutton.



Fig 12m. ... 'low walls and dark stone roofs of a farm bordering the churchyard', (A Mee)

The Dedication – St Michaels or St Giles?

And finally the dedication - curiously the Victoria County History gives the dedication as St Giles based on a will in Northampton Record Office in which Thomas Mosse of Upton left 3s 4d to the chapel of St Giles in Sutton in 1528. The diocesan archivist has no record of a dedication other than St Michael, and points out that to change a church dedication requires an act of parliament. I have been unable to discover any such act.

I offer two hypotheses.

Firstly the main church may always have been dedicated to St Michael. However the South (chantry) Chapel may have been dedicated to St Giles, the patron saint of lepers and cripples. Prior to the surrender of the Abbey to Henry V 111 on 30th November 1539 the manor of Sutton was administered and farmed by the Abbey Almoner who was responsible for such unfortunates and may have used the healthier as estate workers who would worship at, if not in the church. The VCH also mentions one of the church windows having internal rebates for a frame. These could originally have held shutters so the sacrament could be passed out to those not permitted to enter the church.

My second hypothesis is that on the dissolution of the Abbey and transfer of the chapel to the Dean and Chapter of the new Cathedral, the new authorities may have felt they wished to make a clean break with its former association with the Almoner, and chose what they felt to be a more appropriate Saint as patron. In the middle ages St Michael was one of the most popular saints and many parish churches were dedicated to him. He is regarded as the protector of all Christian causes and is often portrayed as overcoming the dragon (the symbol of evil) as depicted in our modern patronal banner and as described in the Book of Revelation.

Keith Garrett

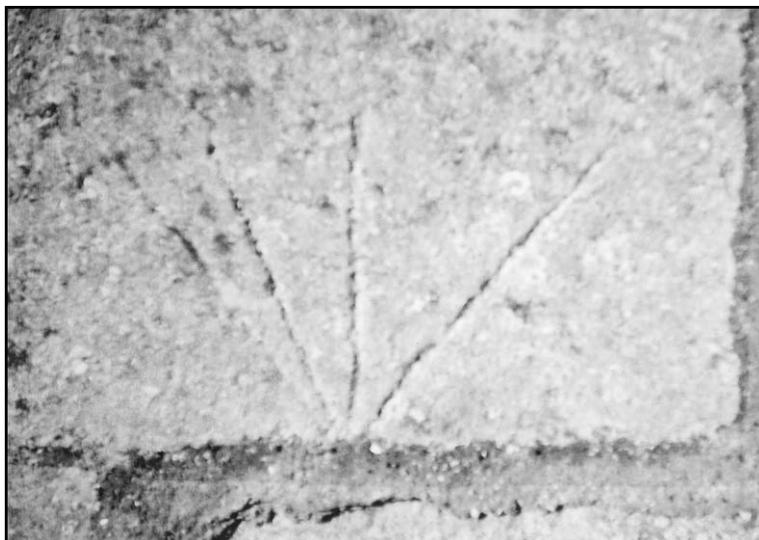


Fig 12n. Scratch dial on the South wall of chantry chapel.

Notes

1. N Pevsner *Buildings of England Series, Bedfordshire, Huntingdon and Peterborough*, Penguin 1968, p350.
2. *Victoria County History, Northamptonshire*, 1901.
3. Arthur Mee, *King's England, Northamptonshire*, Hodder & Stoughton, 1945, p321.
4. *Royal Commission for Historic Monuments* 1969.
5. North's *Church Bells of Northampton*, 1878.
6. Bridges, *History of Northamptonshire*, 1796.
7. WT Collins, *Heraldry Survey of Sutton Church* Heraldry Society, 2000.
8. Markham's *Church Plate of Northamptonshire* 1894.
9. An Episcopal Visitation *Northants Notes and Queries, Vol II*, 1907-9.
10. *Archaeological Journal*, 1913.
11. *Parish Meeting minute book*.

Acknowledgements

N Warnes, *Guide to Sutton Church*.
Sheila Crane.



Fig 12o. Rev William Hopkinson MA JP, Vicar of Sutton 1891, first Vicar of Sutton cum Upton 1903-1909; born 1840 died 1929.



Fig 12p. Anglo-Saxon carved stone – possibly former cross shaft on East wall of the dovecote on the South side of the churchyard.



Fig12q. Bracket, possibly a former corbel, now by the altar in the chancel.