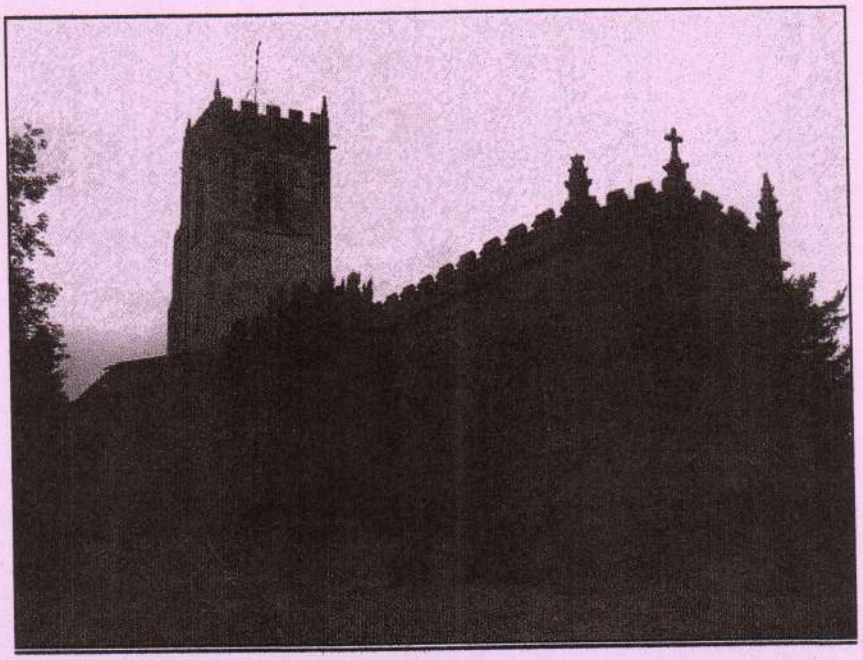

ST LUKE'S CHURCH, HICKLING

a description

Second Edition

by Rory Naismith
Hickling
August 2000

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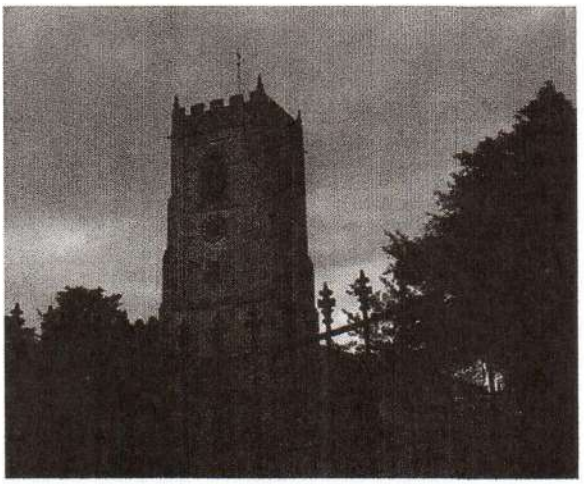


Figure 1 The tower from Main Street

Foreword.

Welcome to Hickling Parish Church.

May I first extend my gratitude to everyone who has helped me in the research and production of this booklet.

I hope that you find it as interesting to read as I did to write.

I wrote the first edition of this booklet as part of my Silver Duke of Edinburgh's award scheme, around a year ago. Since then much restoration work has been carried out on the Anglo-Saxon coffin lid and the Vaux tombstone. I am sure this work will add to the church's interest, facilitate easier viewing and preserve these relics for years to come. I felt that the occasion of this work provided ample opportunity for an update of this booklet.

I have received some recommendations as to further avenues of research and changes to the original, and have tried to incorporate all these into this second edition.

I hope that it comes up to everyone's expectations and does justice to the traditions and artefacts of Hickling Church.

Rory Naismith
25 August 2000

The Church Building.

Like many churches, that of Hickling provided an outlay for both common and noble charity, and from an early time received gifts and embellishments from Lords, Priests as well as dutiful parishioners.

The village is not recorded as possessing a church or priest in the Domesday Book of 1086, but the Anglo-Saxon coffin lid indicates that the village was certainly a settlement capable of supporting a wealthy nobleman.

The list of rectors dates back to 1227, and some sort of church building must have existed here at that time. This may have provided the nucleus for future construction, much of which is in the early English style.

The oldest and least reconstructed section of the current church-the south aisle, which is entered from the porch- is believed to date from the first half of the 14th century. As has been said, it is built in the Early English architectural style. The impressive timbers which form the ceiling are said by local legend to be re-used ship timbers.

The rest of the church has been substantially altered after this. The tower-originally wooden and housing a wooden clock mechanism-was replaced in 1873 with the current tower. The chancel and the nave were also originally constructed in the Early English style, probably at a similar time to the south aisle. However, substantial rebuilding and restoration work carried out in the 18th and 19th centuries (some of which is commemorated on a brass plate on the east wall) has erased most traces of this original building. The roof of the nave was originally high pitched, as can be seen on the east wall of the tower. A gale on 1st November 1887 stripped off the old roof, which was subsequently reconstructed. The timbers, even after this rough treatment, still retain traces of their beautiful original painting.

The east wall and buttress of the south aisle were partially reconstructed in 1736 from a yellowish stone.

The original church was dedicated to Saint Wilfrid, although this was later changed to Saint Luke, almost certainly during the Reformation of the 1530s.

The Church and the Village.

The church and village of Hickling have an extremely long history. Being located on top of a slight rise (placing it above the marshland that then covered the Vale of Belvoir) it has always been a good prospective site for habitation, and it is believed to have been the site of a Roman settlement. This theory has no definite archaeological or textual evidence to its name, but does have some credibility thanks to a discovery of 200 Roman silver denarii in a pot in one of the surrounding fields. Dating to the first century AD, this find was made in the 18th century by a local ploughman.

The actual village is first mentioned in written sources in the 9th century, when Hickling was referred to as Echeling. This name derives from that of the Anglo-Saxon noblewoman who owned the village at that time. It is also recorded in the famous Domesday book of 1086, although at that time neither priest nor church are recorded for Echeling. A list of village rectors, beginning in the year 1227, continues to the present day. In 1291, a taxation roll by Pope Nicholas II tells us that the church and village of Hickling were then worth £20; quite a substantial sum in the 13th century. At this time, the village was part owned by the Abbot of St. Mary in York who held £1 6s 8d worth of property; a nobleman by the name of Adam Potton owning a similar amount.

Hickling continued to grow in the Middle Ages, and by the reign of Henry VIII (1509-1547) the rectory of Hyklyng alone was valued at £18 8s 2d with an extra pension of £1 6s 8d paid to the Prior of Thurgarton. It is interesting to note that this last amount is exactly the same as that owed to the Abbot of St Mary around 250 years previously-perhaps the ownership had merely been transferred for the same amount?

An inventory of goods belonging to the Church of Hikling from the reign of Edward VI (1547-1553) shows that the church must have been very wealthy. Items on the inventory include a silver chalice, brass candlesticks, vestments of white 'bustyan' and green silk and many other items ranging from a stool to cushions covered with green silk.

In 1642 King Charles I abandoned London and raised his standard at Nottingham, beginning a bloody and ferocious conflict which was to engulf Britain for almost ten years. You can read about the effects of the civil war on Hickling in the section entitled 'The Effects of the Civil War'.

Shortly after the civil war ended in England in 1650 the Parliamentary Commissioners describe the rectory as being worth £160 per annum and sequestered from Dr Barsey for state use.

A will dating to the 17th century puts Hickling under the perpetual patronage of Queen's College in Cambridge as part of the last bequest of Mrs Sarah Bardsey. A further note dated 1681 tells us that the will was executed by Sarah Fabian and given to Mr Gearey-a cleric of Leicestershire-to give to the Archdeacon of Leicester. This will does not sign over the actual estate or any income, I believe, but rather fixes an existing relationship between the college and the rectory; Mrs Bardsey asserts so in her will. After this, every rector of Hickling was patronised by the college until well into the 20th century.

Later, in the year of 1865, on the 20th of July, a young boy was born in Hickling and given the name Fred Maltby Warner. As a child he was taken to the United States, and adopted at age 3 months. He went on to become Hicklings most famous son, for from 1904 until 1910 he was the governor of the state of Michigan in the northern United States. He died on the 17th of April 1923 after a long and distinguished career. In 1985, his granddaughter visited Hickling and planted a cherry tree in his memory outside the church. This can still be seen, as can a small plaque telling us about Mr Warner.

The Effects of the Civil War.

The English Civil War, which lasted from 1642 until the execution of Charles I in 1649, had a devastating effect on Hickling and the surrounding area. Indeed, it was in Nottingham that Charles first raised his standard in 1642, and the large hill which you can see in Hickling is known as Hickling Standards after this event.

Hickling and the rest of the Vale of Belvoir was an area of dispute during the war. Located on the border between Royalist and Parliamentarian control, raiders and soldiers from both sides caused havoc across the land. Nominally, it appears that for most of the time the inhabitants' sympathies lay with Parliament, and it was to the Parliamentarian commander of Nottingham Castle, Colonel John Hutchinson, that they looked for protection.

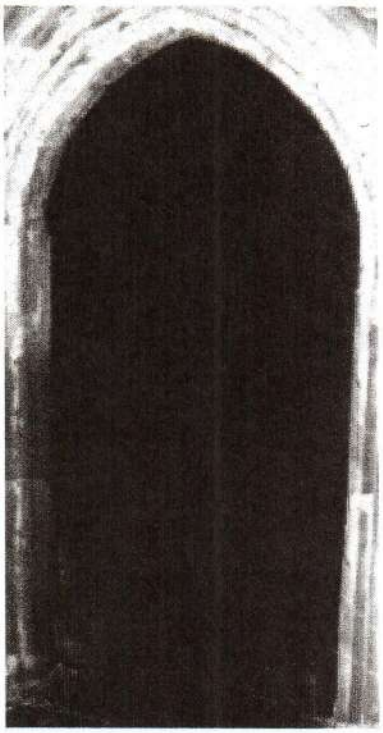
Colonel Hutchinson's family had ancient connections to the Vale, and Owthorpe was an estate of his. After exercising authority across Nottinghamishire and successfully defending the Castle against a number of attacks, he was one of the signatories of Charles I's death warrant in 1649. He built for himself a grand manor house at Owthorpe, which unfortunately has not survived. Its outline, however, can be seen in a field beside Owthorpe Church. This small but pleasant building still houses the bodies of Colonel Hutchinson and many other Hutchinsons and is well worth a visit. The actual site of the crypt in which they are found, however, is lost.

Colonel Hutchinson's wife Lucy kept a diary throughout the period of the Civil War and used this to write memoirs on the life of her husband. In this interesting and valuable work, she described the constant warfare which ravaged the Vale, and also relates the tale of an unfortunate cripple, forced to wander between Hickling, Kinoulton and Owthorpe. Apparently, she had last held residence at Hickling but had previously also lived in both other villages. None wanted the poor cripple, and her presence was so detested that the inhabitants of Hickling set up guard posts to keep her away.

On the mediaeval door, you will notice two (now filled in) holes about 2'-3' off the floor. It is believed that these holes were intended for the purpose of firing muskets through the door, being located at about the correct height for someone kneeling down. This would allow a safe and easy defence of the church in event of assault.

You will also see that a large number of the gargoyles and sculptured heads in the church have had their noses removed. This act of vandalism also occurred in the civil war, and was a practice common to the Cavaliers. The significance of this is not clear, however.

The Vaux tombstone, too, was mutilated and thrown into the chuchyard during or immediately after the civil war due to its associations with Catholicism and Royal power.



The main door

Rectors.

Hickling is known to have had a church rector for more than seven centuries, although the church as a unit has existed even longer. Here is a list of all known rectors:

Instituted 21st July 1227-Adam, son of Robert of Harestan
Instituted 27th June 1234-William de Harelton

* * * * *

Instituted 7th July 1319-Adam de Preston
Instituted 23rd December 1339-Richard de Hakinthorp
Resigned 7th July 1375-Richard de Gray
Instituted 9th July 1375-John Fysheburn
Resigned for church of Walesby-John Wayte
Instituted 15th August 1397-Thomas Wilford
Instituted 6th February 1401-William Haxley
Buried 11th July 1407.
Instituted 18th July 1407-John Bowland
Richard Conyngston-died 14??
Instituted 9th February 1413-John Wysaw
Buried 9th October 1449
Resigned-John Bithekirk
Instituted 27th March 1459-John Warner
Instituted 11th May 1462-Thomas Drakyn or Deaton
Buried 22nd January 1484
Instituted 1st January 1484-Brother Thomas Stanthorp
Instituted 26th October 1505-Thomas Basford
Instituted 19th January 1508-William Nevyle
Instituted 31st January 1510-Thomas Porte
Instituted 9th April 1515-Ralph Babyngton
Buried 29th August 1521
It is to this man that the 'Babyngton Brass' is dedicated
Instituted 16th September 1521-John Boyle
Instituted 8th August 1566-William Atkynson
Buried 7th June 1593
Instituted 13th May 1593-Henry Stubbing
Instituted 8th September 1598-Richard Snowden
Consecrated Bishop of Carlyle-24th November 1616
Died in London 15th May 1621
Instituted 11th June 1617-Edmund Bardsey

During the Commonwealth period rectors for Hickling are not recorded. However the following two clerics are cited in connection with Hickling:

John Rocket: mentioned as Incumbent in the Parliamentary Commissioners' Report of 1650. He published a discourse entitled 'Divisions Cut in pieces by the sword of the lord; or, A Discourse on a text of Scripture' in London in 1650. This work, in which he names himself as 'Minister of the Word at Hickling in Nottinghamshire' is dedicated to John the Earl of Rutland, John Hutchinson (almost certainly the same one who held Nottingham Castle during the civil war and was now an influential nobleman with an estate at Owthorpe).

George Fisher, minister of Hickling, married Frances Scott at St. Mary's Church in Nottingham on the 21st of April 1653.]

Instituted 27th March 1661-George Fisher
Married Elizabeth Scott-11th June 1696
Patronised by Charles II.

Instituted 7th March 1720-Nicholas Penny
Appointed Dean of Lichfield-21st December 1730
Died 18th January 1744/5

Instituted 25th September 1730-John Warde

Instituted 21st January 1756-Henry Rand

Instituted 6th March 1766-Henry Morris
Died 4th August 1774

Instituted 14th January 1775-Robert Barber

Instituted 18th January 1797-John Thomas Jordan
Died 23rd December 1820

Instituted 3rd May 1821-Edward Anderson
Died 6th January 1843, buried 3 days later

Instituted 1843-William Henry Walker
Died 21st January 1857, buried 3 days later

Instituted 1857-William Henry Edwards
Buried 24th December 1882

Instituted 1883-Thomas Skelton
Resigned 10th February 1905

Instituted 2nd May 1905-Francis James Ashmall

Instituted 1928-William James Dannatt, M.A

Instituted 1934-Lancelot Wilson Foster, M.A
Served as Chaplain in WWII

Instituted 1952-Leslie Thomas Prosser Harwood, M.A
Rector for Hickling and Kinoulton

Instituted 1978-Percy Cox
Priest in Charge

Instituted 1980-Peter John Harrison, A.K.C
Hickling joins with Kinoulton and Upper Broughton to form a United Benefice.

Instituted 1995-Stephanie Fahie
Priest in Charge
Appointed Rector 2000

The Bells.

Hickling boasts an especially fine ring of bells, which are still used to sound the times each day. There have been bells in Hickling since at least the 16th century, when the church possessed 2 large bells and a third smaller one. In 1740 3 more substantial bells were added. These five larger bells were all re-hung with ball bearings in 1935, and one was also recast. This arrangement of five bells remained in use until a bell was purchased from Kinoulton in 1987 because it proved unsuitable for their church. Cast in 1794, it was one of 5 originally placed in the new Kinoulton church tower. However, the ring of all these bells proved too great a strain for the brick tower and produced large cracks in the brickwork. Consequently they fell silent and were not re-hung for many years, by which time the wheels and frames had fallen into decay and had to be removed. One of these bells-

the number 3 bell-was thus purchased by Hickling when it was found to fit the tower. A seventh bell was hung in 1997 and, after a long fund-raising campaign by parishioners, an eighth was added in 1998.
The bells are inscribed as follows:

1. 'E. ARNOLD OF LEICESTER...1794'
2. 'J. TAYLOR & CO. FOUNDERS LOUGHBOROUGH 1873'
3. 'GOD SAVE HIS CHURCH 1722' (Recast 1935)
4. 'My roaringe sound doth warning give that men cannot heare always lyve' [1618]
5. 'BE YT KNOWNE TO ALL THAT DOTH ME SEE THAT NEWCOMBE OF LEICESTER MADE MEE 1602'
6. 'All men that heare my mournfull sound repent before you lye in the ground.' [1618]
7. Cast by J. Taylor, Founders of Loughborough in 1997
8. (The eighth bell bears no inscription and was cast in 1998 by J. Taylor, Founders of Loughborough 1998)

A treble-no. 1- was brought here from Kinoulton in 1987, and the mounting on which they are all placed dates to 1810.
The church also possesses a small 'SANCTUS' bell from the late 18th century.

The Babyngton Brass.

The brass slab set in the floor here is one of only two such ecclesiastical brasses in the whole of Nottinghamshire, and as such constitutes an important monument.
The brass was carved in 1521 or shortly afterwards, following the death of the village rector Ralph Babyngton in the August of that year. Originally, the slab lay right at the altar, in accordance with Mr Babyngton's pious wishes to be close to God. Subsequent building work has, however, left him at the lower end of the chancel.
The brass is intricately carved with a depiction of Ralph Babyngton himself, wearing his rectoral robes. The Latin inscription above tells us Ralph's name and that of his father, and points out that their home lay at Dethyk in Derbyshire. It also tells us that Ralph was responsible for much repair and building work here, and gives us the date of his death. The inscription in the ribbon is psalm cxvi: 'I will take up the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the lord'. The two coats of arms beside this are (on the left) Babyngton and (on the right) Fitzherbert (another Derbyshire family, probably related to the Babyngtons).
Ralph Babyngton himself was rector of Hickling from 9th April 1515 until August 1521. Before becoming rector, he studied at Cambridge University (this is the origin of Hickling's connection with that University) in 1503 and was also rector at Hintlesham in Suffolk prior to coming to Hickling. Another memorial to him in Ashover Church, Derbyshire, closer to his birthplace, again shows him in his rectoral capacity, this time with his parents, two brothers and sister.
The brass here was no small undertaking, and would have been a very expensive project at the time. Babyngton, however, was of an old and wealthy family. The first of the Babyngton line, Sir John de Babington, is recorded as living in Northumberland in 1220. Subsequent members of the family acquired further titles and honours, and were lords from 1337. Many Babingtons fought for their country during the Hundred Years War in France (1337-1453). Sir John de Babington was Knighted by Edward III in 1352 and was Chief Captain of Morlaix in Brittany. Thomas Babington of Dethick, Derbyshire, served with Henry V at Agincourt in 1415 and his weapons from that battle were family heirlooms for many years. One of his ancestors from this period, his great-great-grandfather Sir John Babington, who died in 1409, is buried in East Bridgford. Whether this is the

same John Babington who was knighted in 1352 is unknown. Later on, during the wars of the Roses, Sir John Babington of Dethick and Kingston was slain at the Battle of Bosworth (1485) by Henry VII's Provost Marshall, Sir James Blount.
His son Thomas, Ralph's father, did not lose favour, for he continued as Sheriff of Derby and Nottingham just as his unfortunate father had done. His marriages brought the family large amounts of land and money, which would have easily allowed his son Ralph to have this brass put up in his memory.
Amazingly, Thomas Babington's will, which was used upon his death on the 13th of March 1518, survives. In it, he requests that he be buried close to his first wife Edith in Ashover and that his executors organise much of the inheritance. He also stipulates that all goods not bequeathed be given to the poor and that certain scholars he has helped with money at Oxford and Cambridge receive £1/6s/8d per annum so long as they say prayers for his soul. His eldest son Anthony Babington is named as heir, and Ralph (the fourth of sixteen children) is one of the executors of the will.
After Ralph's death in 1521 the Babingtons remained a powerful and wealthy family. Even after Henry VIII reformed the Church in 1532-6 they remained proud Catholics, as with many noble families in the Midlands. One of them, another Anthony Babington born in 1561, led a major conspiracy to replace Queen Elizabeth I with Mary, Queen of Scots in 1586. A dreamy, good looking and intelligent young man, he used his money and charm to win over many influential Catholic nobles of the day to his cause. Unfortunately, he was rather more idealistic than practical. His letters to Mary (carried back and forth hidden in beer barrels) dealt unashamedly with the plot, and he had a portrait painted of himself at the head of his fellow conspirators with the motto 'These are my companions, whom danger itself calls'. Not surprisingly the plot was very soon discovered, and Babington together with all the other conspirators were questioned, tortured and executed. One of them, Chidiock Tichbourne, penned the famous poem 'Elegy to Himself' the night before his execution.
The Babington clan continued after even this catastrophe, and on the 18th of December 1758 produced another star. Thomas Babington of Rothley temple (who continued the Babington tradition of studying at Cambridge) was sheriff of Leicester in 1780 and MP for Leicester in 1800. He was one of the pioneers for anti-slavery, and campaigned long and successfully for its abolition with the famous William Wilberforce. He died in 1837.
The ancient family of Ralph Babington, who lies beneath this magnificent brass, has surely one of the most interesting and colourful histories in England. Its present members, who now live in Leicestershire, continue to study their roots and may I say a great thanks to Thomas Babington Elliott of Hallaton, Leicestershire for his vital help with information surrounding the Babingtons and their history.

The brass is shown on the next page.

BABINGTON BRASS, HICKLING.

The Anglo Saxon Cross Slab.

Located at the east end of the south aisle is a large Anglo Saxon burial slab. The intricately carved relief shows the ancient Scandinavian pagan design of bears and dragons, which dates back well into the Viking period. Such a stone would certainly have been carved for a wealthy nobleman. Similar designs are common on 'hog-back' stones in Yorkshire. However, this stone is totally unique, as it is a flat backed stone.

It is believed to have been carved around the 10th century AD, although some reckon it to be from the 9th or 11th centuries.

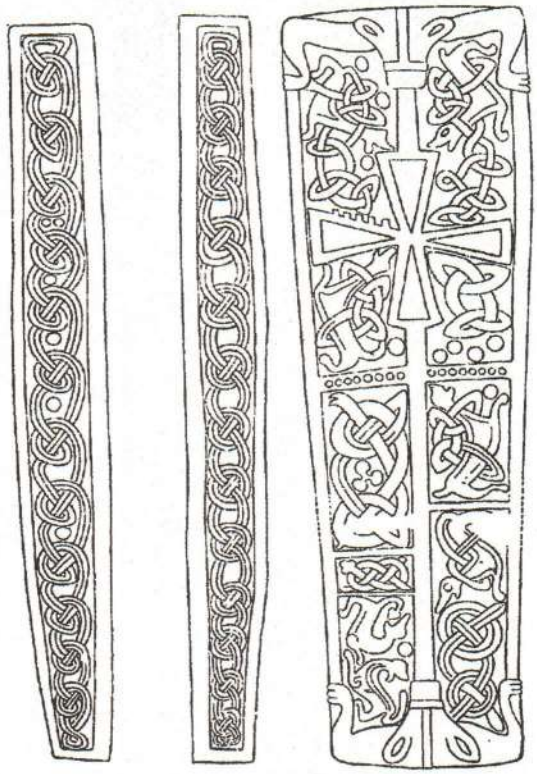
The stone was dug up in the churchyard, in or around the year 1821, and has been kept in the church ever since.

In 1888, it was inspected by the Cambridge Professor of Archaeology, who described it as "the most perfect and valuable pre-Norman work of the kind in England…as a sarcophagus with other than Christian subjects it is quite unrivalled."

The stone was set in the wall of the south aisle for many years, certainly prior to 1888. It was held vertically in place by cement and, it was later discovered, an iron sparring rod. However, over the subsequent years minute movements of the wall have put great stress on the stone which by 1998 was severely cracked. Steps were taken to ensure its preservation, and after being examined by Hanna Conservation of York in 1999 it was removed from its setting on the south aisle wall and repositioned in the chancel atop four Clipsham stone plinths. It was necessary during the conservation to actually remove the coffin lid in two separate pieces where it had been split by the

crack, and in doing so it was found that a further small section of the lid had been sunk into the floor. Sadly, this had deteriorated beyond all recognition.
The line of the crack was repaired carefully with a safe mortar, which now allows the stone to be viewed safely in its original state of construction.
The removal of the coffin lid offered a unique opportunity to have the stone of it tested to find its origin. A small sample from the join area was sent to the British Geological Survey in Keyworth, where careful tests found that the coffin lid was made from Sandstone of the Triassic period (roughly 230 million years ago). Nottingham Castle is located on an outcrop of similar stone and it is not hard to imagine the stone coming from such a local source. However, the tests also found that the closest match to the stone came from a sandstone quarry at Hollington in Staffordshire. Although further afield, this is far from an impossibility and may go to show the lengths to which Saxon nobles went to secure themselves in the next life.
The village sends its thanks to Hanna Conservation of York for investigating both the coffin lid and the Vaux tombstone and giving us their valuable advice. Also many thanks to the Skillington Workshop of Grantham for carrying out all of these long-awaited repairs to the coffin lid.

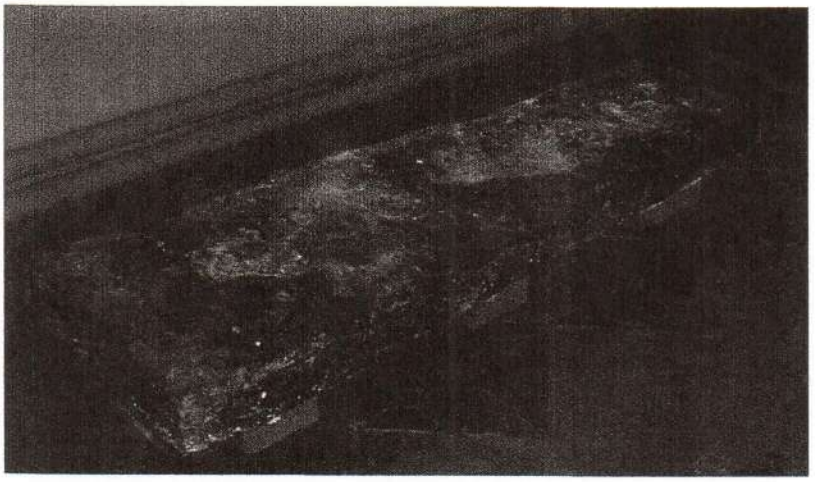
The designs of the stone are shown below.



PRE-NORMAN GRAVE COVER, HICKLING.

The Vaux Tombstone.

In 1983 digging in the churchyard revealed this tombstone. Left at the time where it was found, the stone soon accumulated damp and moss and was in serious danger from natural deterioration until December 1999 when the Skillington Workshop of Grantham, who specialise in the protection of old buildings and large artefacts such as these, removed it and placed it in its new home in the chancel. It rests now on a lead base with three stone supports, as was recommended by Hanna Conservation of York. This will prevent any further damage and allow it to be more easily viewed by visitors. Due to its fragile nature we request that care is taken when examining the stone.
The stone was originally the top of a coffin or sarcophagus, which may have stood next to the brass memorial of Ralph Babyngton in the chancel, and almost certainly would have borne a carved image of the occupant or his coat of arms. This may have been removed by one side or the other during the Civil War or in the Commonwealth period immediately after, during which symbols of aristocratic, Catholic and Royalist rule were often defaced and cast out.
The stone was carved around about 1600, and is inscribed in Latin with 'Here lies William Harrowden on whose soul may god have mercy, Amen'. Unfortunately, moss presently obscures the legend.



The William Harrowden referred to was of an ancient family which rose to prominence through marriage around 1200. They enjoyed mixed successes; John de Vallibus (an ancient form of Vaux) was imprisoned after siding against the King in the Barons' War in the 13th century, John de Vaux was MP for Nottinghamshire in the 1330s and 40s and died during the black death in 1349. The first Lord Harrowden was Nicholas Vaux, grandfather of the Lord Harrowden buried in Hickling, who was created as such by Henry VIII on the 27th of April 1523. His palace was located at Great Harrowden in Northamptonshire. Their family had gained estates across the country, including Cottam in Nottinghamshire, Gisburn in Yorkshire, Bottisham in Cambridgeshire and Great Harrowden itself. Hickling, however, was not an estate of the Vaux family until the time of Nicholas' son, Thomas Harrowden. He married Elizabeth Cheyne, aged 6 at the time of the wedding in 1511, whose family (which came over from Normandy in 1066) owned Hickling as well as Saxondale, Edwinstowe and many other places in Nottinghamshire. These lands were later passed to the son of that marriage, William, Lord Vaux of Harrowden, who was an active nobleman during the second half of the 16th century. Apparently his family retained their Catholicism even after the reformation, and this will almost certainly be the reason why the tomb was removed by Puritans following the Civil War.

The most famous legacy of the Vaux family was located in London, and was, of course, the Vauxhall Pleasure Gardens. Opened as a park in 1660 they became the height of fashion in the 18th century until they were built over in 1859. It is believed that it was Thomas Vaux, father of the William buried in Hickling and Comptroller of Henry VIII's court, who built here his mansion of Vaux Hall, conveniently located between Henry's palaces at Greenwich and Hampton Court. Although the Pleasure Gardens have long been covered by buildings the name continues today both in that part of London and, most famously, in the motor company of Vauxhall.
Over the long history of the Vaux family the name has undergone many changes. From de Vallibus in the early 13th century it became de Vaux in the 14th century. After the 17th century the family lost much of its power and influence due to its Catholic faith, and was limited to Great Harrowden itself. The last Lord Vaux died there in 1935 and left a fine Catholic Chapel in Great Harrowden hall. Although this last family retained the old form of the name variations had developed by this time. Vaus, Vaues and Faux came into existence as corruptions of Vaux, and this may well have further developed into Fawkes, Faulkes and Faulks. A spinster by the name of Julie Faux left a will in Hickling in 1688, and even today the names of Faulks and Faulkes are common in Hickling and the Vale of Belvoir. Perhaps these are the descendants of the ancient lords of the manor?

The Churchyard.

There are a great many items of interest located around the church.
On the west wall can be seen a very beautiful and intricate 'Tree of Life' coffin lid, which is of early 13th century date. The 'Tree of Life' was another survival from pre-Christian paganism, in which the Vikings and Saxons believed the world was built upon a great tree known as Yggdrasil. This was transplanted by Christian evangelists into the idea of the 'Tree of Life' as it is seen here. Maypoles are another old tradition; the maypole represented Yggdrasil in pre-Christian days, and like so many other ancient customs was incorporated by the early church into its calendar of festivals.

Figure 2 "The Tree of Life" coffin lid

The actual gravestones in the churchyard are also of interest, and they include a number of rare examples of stones in which the stone has been cut away from around the lettering, leaving the words and designs standing out in relief. Such craftsmanship shows extreme skill and is correspondingly rare. It is believed to have been the work of a craftsman in the Vale of Belvoir, perhaps Hickling itself. All of these stones date to the period 1700-1725, and are amongst the earliest regular gravestones in the churchyard.
A spot of a decidedly more macabre character is to be found at the rear of the church, where (to the right of the entrance close to the back fence) you will notice a small area of raised ground without any graves upon it. This is the site of a Plague Pit- a hurried mass grave in which the victims of the plague of 1666 were interred together in desperation by the survivors with little ceremony. The plague remains active for many centuries, and excavating any plague pit is both dangerous as well as morbid. Interestingly, the London tube-train network was built with its many twists and turns to avoid these plague pits.

Other Items inside the Church.

Aside from the Anglo Saxon cross slab, Vaux tombstone and 16th century brass, there are a number of other items of interest in the church.
Just inside the door is a poor box, dated 1685 and inscribed 'REMEMBER THE POORE RB'. This would have been used by generous parishioners to leave donations to the local poor. However, this has suffered over the centuries from less kindly attentions.

A collection of small pieces of wood, found in a local attic, is believed to be the remains of a choir screen dating to the late 18th century.

The Reredos, which dates to the Victorian period, is also said to have been carved by a local craftsman and contains a painting of the 'Supper at Emmaus'.

A series of brass plaques around the wall commemorates the lives of local worthies in years gone by, and tombstones may be seen on the floor of the nave, some of which date back to the early 18th century. An impressive war memorial is a fitting tribute to local men who gave the ultimate sacrifice in both wars.

The large stone font located in the corner dates to the reign of Richard II (1377-1399) although it was 'restored' in the Reformation of the 1530s. The knob of the font cover is dated to 1665.

The chancel does retain one of its old windows, on the east wall, which contains parts of very ancient stained glass amongst newer additions. These include heads and heraldic devices together with the badge of Henry VII (fixing the date of the glass to his reign of 1485-1509) and the arms of Castile and Navarre in Spain. This window may have been smashed or damaged during the Reformation of the 1530s or the Commonwealth period (1649-1660) following the Civil War.

The font

Bibliography and Further Reading.

Bibliography:

'Notes on The Bingham 100', E. Godfrey

'The Church Bells of Nottinghamshire pt. II', George A. Dawson

'The Nottingham Journal', 24/1/31

Reports on Babyngton Brass, Vaux tombstone and Anglo-Saxon cross slab from Skillington Workshop, Hanna Conservation and the British Geological Survey.

Further Reading:

'Hickling Reflections of Yesteryear', Hazel M. Wadkin

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