

A GUIDE TO ST MICHAEL'S AYNHO



This unusual Norman/Georgian church dedicated to St Michael is within the Astwick Vale Benefice in the Peterborough Diocese. Young and old gather regularly to worship the same God that generation after generation have worshipped here.

We hope one day you may worship with us.

While you are visiting please take a few moments to pause here in God's house and to bring to God, in prayer, the joys and sorrows of life.

Price 50p

Welcome to St Michael's Church in the village of Aynho – we very much hope these notes will help you enjoy your visit.

A Short History of St Michael's

This Grade 1 listed church is built of ashlar limestone, brought in from the Cotswolds, and today's church comes from two distinct architectural periods.

The **TOWER** is all that remains of the original church which was built in the reign of Edward III. The 14th century tower with its embattled top is of the decorated period. The **NAVE** comes from the classical Georgian period in the early 18th century.

On either side of the **WEST DOOR** are niches which once held statues. It is thought these were of St Peter and St Paul and it is likely that they were mutilated by soldiers during the Civil War. The remains of a statue, probably of St Michael slaying the dragon, may be seen above the door. All that is remaining is just a dragon's tail.

As a result of severe damage caused during the Civil War the main body of the church was demolished in 1723 and rebuilt in the Classical style with pediments and high arched windows to match the adjacent Aynhoe Park House architecture.

Thomas Cartwright financed the major part of the rebuild and commissioned his master mason, Edward Wing, who had been responsible for both the restoration of the Aynhoe Park House some twenty years earlier and building other churches in London, to complete the work.

A Brief History of Aynho

The recorded existence of the village dates back to the time of Edward the Confessor, who was born at the village of Islip on the outskirts of Oxford. The land was held in the King's name by Asgar a Saxon Thane around 1043 who was Edward's standard bearer. The spelling of Aynho has varied greatly over the centuries including *AIENHO* (*Domesday Book*), *EYNHO* (*The Book of Fees*), *AINHO* (*Episcopal Register*) and other forms. It may be translated as the Saxon *AEGAS HOH* (*Aegas Spur*) or Spring on the Hill.

William of Normandy after his conquest of this country dispossessed Asgar and gave the land to one of his own knights – Geoffrey de Mandeville. Subsequently it passed into the hands of a variety of old English landed families the last of which was, Shakerley Marmion, who sold Aynhoe Park House and the estate to Richard Cartwright, a barrister of the Inner Temple in 1615 who originated from Cheshire.

The Registers

The registers date from 1562 and are in a good state of preservation. They may be seen at Delapre Abbey, the Northamptonshire County Records Office in Northampton. There are records of woollen burials at Aynho which were encouraged when wool was available. The body was buried with a fleece or woollen shroud.

The Interior

On entering the church through a vestibule at the base of the tower you will see that the interior is not typical of an English village church, it is rather more in the style of a city place of worship. There is no chancel and the nave seating consists of **BOX PEWS** set in four distinctive blocks and a **GALLERY** at the west end.



At first glance the ceiling would appear to be out of keeping with the Georgian interior. There were problems in the mid 1960s with falling roof trusses (note lack of pillars) and major restoration work had to be carried out to the dark wooden ceiling constructed some 100 years earlier. The architects, Messrs G Forsyth Lawson & Partners, attempted to recreate the Georgian effect by means of a suspended ceiling that you see today. The original white plaster ceiling with domed wall cornice, constructed simultaneously with the new 1723 building, can be seen in the 1846 painting by Lady Cartwright¹. Some evidence of this is still to be found in the void above the current ceiling. The **PULPIT** is Georgian and the **LECTERN** is a carved wooden pelican.

¹ A small reprint of this is included in the picture of sketches at the western end of the nave on the wall under the gallery.

The Gallery

The **WEST GALLERY** is 18th century and is supported by paired Tuscan columns with stairs at each end. Due to the very narrow wooden steps leading up to the top of the gallery it is no longer used for services.

A special project to integrate a small kitchen and toilet under the gallery was completed in 2005 together with the removal of two rows of pews creating an area for fellowship and children's activities. The 18th century font was moved from behind the west door and relocated to the north aisle as a result of the revised layout.

Underneath the gallery on the north side of the west wall is a timetable of Aynho C of E School which was presented to the church by Mr D Morgan, the last headmaster, prior to its closure. On the opposite south side are various prints of historical views in and around the church.

Memorials

Nearly all the memorial tablets on the walls and in the small side chapel are to the Cartwrights, who were Lords of the Manor from 1615 to the mid 1950s and lived mostly in the adjacent Aynhoe Park House. Note also the two marble memorials on either side of the altar – the carved and painted armorial bearings being Italian work. Other significant marble wall tablets include that to Matthew Hutton (died 1711) by Edward Stanton framed with baroque scrolls and draperies and that to Thomas Chapman (died 1684) framed with Corinthian columns, scroll pediment and urn together with a similar one to Rhoda Chapman (died 1686), both attributed to William Stanton.

To the right of the lectern is a plaque in memory of two brothers, sons of one of the three Cartwrights to be Rectors here, who were killed in battle during the Great War.

The most recent memorial is set in the floor of the central aisle and was given by the Banham family as a record of all former Rectors. When Robert Wylde came to be Rector in 1646, he and a rival candidate each had to preach a sermon to decide who deserved the living of Aynhoe. When asked who had won he wittily replied, "*We divided it, I got the Ay and he the No!*"

The Windows

Prior to 1857 it is probable that all the original windows (1723) were clear glazed, several of which can be seen at the west end of the nave. It is likely the windows were glazed with grisaille glass soon after the east window (1857) was installed as described below.

East Window

Unlike the windows in Lady Cartwright's painting of 1846 most are now stained glass. The present window above the altar is the work of Thomas Willement. He is probably one of the most important figures promoting a Gothic revival in stained glass. His initials may be found in the small shield dated 1857. Willement was heraldic artist to George IV and specimens of his work are to be found in St George's Chapel, Windsor. The three large roundels depicting 'The Last Supper', 'The Crucifixion' and 'The Resurrection' are set against a ground of stylised vine foliage.



Kempe Windows

There are two Kempe windows (C1900) located on the south side of the nave adjacent to the small Cartwright Chapel. Charles Kempe was inspired by 15th century stained glass, which influenced all his ecclesiastical work. His use of blue, green and ruby glass with large areas of silver staining combined with the delicate detailed painting of the figures was a hallmark of his style. If you look carefully you can see small sheaves of corn on both windows which he introduced as a symbol of his work after 1895. Kemp windows can be found in the UK and abroad, his largest commission being in Winchester Cathedral. The window nearest the chapel depicts 'St Michael spearing a red dragon' and the window nearest the south door depicts 'The Annunciation'.

The Organ

The organ (C1835) is a small 2-manual instrument with a straight pedal board built by Bevington of Soho London. The case is not distinctive but the visible pipes are decorated.

Specification

GREAT			SWELL	
Open Diapason	8'		Open Diapason	8'
Dulciana (above cc)	8'		Flute	4'
Claribel (above cc)	8'		Oboe	8'
Stopped Diap. Bass	8'			
Principal	4'		PEDAL	
Mixture	2rks		Bourdon	16'
ACCESSORIES				
Swell to Great Coupler				
Manual to Pedals Coupler				
3 combination pedals				

The Cartwright Family Chapel

This chapel on the south side of the nave is dominated by the black and white chest tomb erected in 1654 to Richard Cartwright founder of the Cartwright family at Aynhoe. His corpse, along with those of the rest of the early family members, is interred in the vault below the floor. On the north side of the chapel can be found an interesting wood carving. The brass plaque, in French, gives the following information:

“A carving of Christ given by King Louis XIII to the sisters of the Hospital of St Louis to put in their chapel.”

The building which is seen at the bottom represents the old hospital begun under Henry IV in 1606 and finished under Louis XIII in 1619. This unusual carving comes from the sale by the Augustine Sisters when they returned in 1906 and was bought by J Coudere of Paris. It was a gift to St Michael's from the Cartwrights in memory of Richard Carwright (the last squire) and his son Edward.

The Clock

The clock serves two circular dials on the north and west faces of the tower. The mechanism is housed in a wooden cabinet on the floor of the tower. The clock is signed *Ed. Hemins-Bister Fecit 1740*. Edward Hemins had a bell

foundry in Bell Lane, Bicester and cast bells for numerous churches in the surrounding counties as well as turret clocks for Aynho, Steeple Aston and Ditchley Park. When wound by hand it ran for only four days even though the weights fell through two stories of the tower – winding is now automatic.

The Carillon

The clock also serves a carillon movement with pins for seven tunes using the ring of eight bells. The pins are set on a rotating drum which moves sideways a fraction of an inch at the end of each day to bring a new set of pins into use. At the end of the week the drum returns to its starting position. All this now happens automatically though when wound by hand it ran for only 12 hours if set to play at 3 hour intervals. The times now set are 9.00am, 12 noon, 3.00pm and 6.00pm each day as follows:



Sunday	We Love the place, O God.
Monday	God moves in a mysterious way.
Tuesday	Life let us cherish.
Wednesday	At the name of Jesus.
Thursday	Bluebells of Scotland.
Friday	Sweet the Moment.
Saturday	Home sweet Home.

The Bells

In 1552 there were “*11j bells in ye stepul & a sanct bell*”. Before 1870 there were six bells hung in a wooden frame. Two lighter bells were added to make Aynho, Brackley and King’s Sutton the only eight bell towers in South Northamptonshire. In 1910 the bells were re-hung in a cast-iron frame in two tiers: Treble, 4th, 6th and a small sanctus bell being hung above the others. The tenor, treble and second were all re-cast in 1910. This work was done by John Taylor of Loughborough and the carillon was installed when the work was finished. In 1975 the 6th bell was re-cast but the part with the original inscription was cut out and may now be seen in the chapel.

Details of the bells which are tuned in the key of F are as follows:

Treble	1870	(re-cast 1910 by Taylor) originally by Warner & Son, London
2 nd	1870	(re-cast 1910 by Taylor) originally by Warner & Son, London
3 rd	1698	Henry Bagley of Chacombe for Thos. Cartwright
4 th	1649	HB (probably as above). Inscription reads, " <i>Mary Cartwright gave this bell</i> "
5 th	1635	Inscription reads, " <i>God save our King</i> "
6 th	1620	(re-cast 1975 by Whitechapel Foundry, London) originally by Robert Atton of Buckingham
7 th	1603	
8 th	1617	(re-cast 1910 by Taylor) originally by Robert Atton of Buckingham. Weight 16cwt.

There is no record of any full peals being rung.

The maintenance of the bells and carillon is very costly. The recent carillon overhaul was over £6,000.

Churchyard

At the end of the gravel drive leading from the gates will be seen the **CROSS**. In olden days smaller crosses marked the spots from which itinerant preachers took services. With the establishment of a church building in the village the cross would then have been removed to its present place on consecrated ground. This cross however appears to be of a later date.

Near the churchyard cross are two cast iron memorials over graves which are in reverse order to other graves. Here are buried two Roman Catholic members of the Cartwright family and various associated gravestones may be seen on the right as one approaches the Cross.



The WAR MEMORIAL consists of two stone tablets set in the wall of the north-west corner overlooking the flag pole.

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