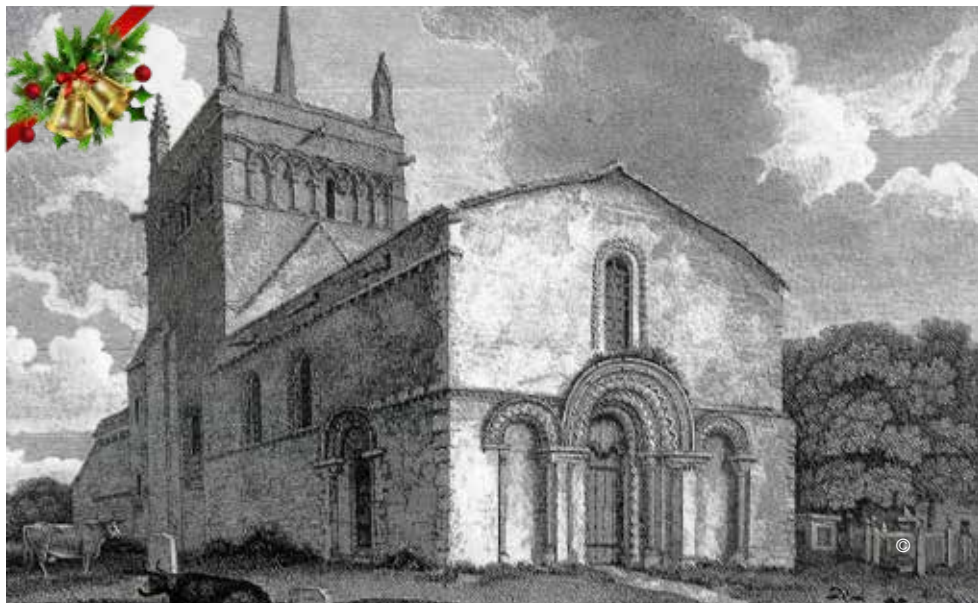


DOWN MEMORY LANE

Continuing our series looking at Stewkley past and present



St Michael's Church at Christmastime

As we head into the Christmas season, it seems entirely appropriate to feature Stewkley Church, amongst the best preserved of all Norman parish churches in England. It remains clearly identifiable today, seen in the modern image from the north-west, in comparison with the delightful pastoral scene in the 1807 engraving by B Howlett, from a drawing by William Alexander, which appears in Britton's *Architectural Antiquities of Great Britain*.

The most obvious difference is in the building's architecture as a result of the restoration of the Nave and Chancel roofs to their original Norman 45-degree pitches with clay tile coverings. This was part of the restoration and conservation work carried out in 1862 by the celebrated Victorian Gothic Revival architect, G E Street.

The roofs of the Nave and Chancel had been lowered to low-pitch, lead covered roofs in 1684, from their original Norman pitch, marked on the 1807 engraving by the water-table on the west elevation of the Tower.

Although there is no evidence of damage to the Church in the English Civil War 30 years previously, the Church was likely to have suffered neglect and the roofs may have been leaking and in poor shape.

The restoration of the roof pitches required the gable ends to be raised in height. Street was given the opportunity to introduce the small oculus window in the west elevation. It is interesting to note on the modern image, the 'tide' mark on the west front which marked the transition from the original, darker ironstone material to the later rubble limestone which George Street introduced above. Street also removed the small masonry steeple in 1862 and replaced it with the present iron weathercock.



The disfiguring Perpendicular pinnacles at each angle of the Tower were eventually removed in 1964 when they became unsafe and in danger of falling. How fortunate we are to have this perfect gem of late Norman ecclesiastical architecture in our village.

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FROM THE GRAPEVINE 10 YEARS AGO...

From December 2012, glorious autumn sunshine greeted the crowds at Stewkley War Memorial for Remembrance Sunday on 11 November...Tim Chappell was presented with a Barbara Ginn painting of the Recreation Ground in recognition of his many years of service to the Rec...Stewkley FC 1st team trounced Steeple Claydon 9-2, with Jack Howe slotting four goals... there was much consternation about Bucks CC's seeming inability to effectively timetable bus services for the benefit of Stewkley residents (so what's new? -Editor) ...Nature Watch recommended that carrots are not a good idea to feed to Santa's reindeer as there could be digestive repercussions...and the untimely and extremely sad death of villager Kathy England was recorded in an obituary.



FROM THE GRAPEVINE 20 YEARS AGO

From December 2002, a Community Fund (formerly National Lottery) bid was filed for the Village Hall refurbishment project...a front page appeal directly to 'doggies' was made by youth footballers to get their owners to clear up their 'doggy doings' from the Rec...Stewkley Churches were holding an evening of carols around the Village Hall Christmas tree... it was suggested that the problem preventing traffic calming measures being implemented on the Dunton and Wing Roads was poor visibility at these sites...firemen must have been on strike as villagers were advised to locate their nearest fire hydrant to assist the Army in fighting a fire... shock and sadness were expressed at the sudden death of Mike Hardings, recently retired after 40 years as Stewkley Parish Clerk...Joe Millward and Steven Willis won trophies for Stewkley Vicarage Cricket Club 1st XI batting and bowling respectively... and the Christmas Band Concert, a Village Hall New Year's Eve Ball, and a Burns' Night Supper (fund raising for St Michael's Church Bells), were eagerly anticipated.

