

## Churchyard

The churchyard is quite small and is bounded on the south and west sides by buildings, and on the east by open fields.



The number of headstones is fairly small. The main features of interest are a number of flat stones at the south east corner of the church. Amongst them can be found the earliest decipherable stone which is dated 1745. Whether the stones were vertical to begin with, cannot be ascertained.

The other feature of interest is the headstone of Ethel Gordon Manson. Ethel Manson became the first state-registered nurse when state registration was started in 1921. Born in 1857, she became matron of St Paul's hospital aged 24. She was responsible for proper training for nurses, founding the British Nurses Association and the



British College of Nurses, but counted among her opponents at the time Florence Nightingale, along with many doctors, who were against the 'professionalisation' of nursing.

Ethel married Bedford Fenwick, MD and died in 1949, aged 90.

# Welcome to St Helena's Church Thoroton

The pretty church of St Helena is now part of the Cranmer Group of churches for which the incumbent is based at Aslockton.

History of the church  
Earliest records show that there was a priest at Thoroton at the time of Domesday (1086). In 1093 it was given to the Diocese of Lincoln by William II Rufus.

The church has a north aisle from around 1190 and a slightly later south arcade dating from around 1200—1225. The tower, which is largely 14th century,

includes a unique, beautifully carved canopy niche.

During the 18th century it would seem that the church was considerably neglected; there is reference to the chancel being in need of rebuilding in 1715, but nothing being done, and by 1844 the chancel, porch, and north aisle had disappeared and the north arcade had been walled up.

When Sir Stephen Glynne visited the church in April 1866 he commented, "The chancel windows are bad ... [with] none on the



north side. The east gable of the Chancel is patched with brick..."

In 1868 the church was severely damaged when it was struck by lightning. This unfortunate incident in many ways saved the building, as a major restoration was set in place as well as the repair of the damage caused. At this time the chancel was completely rebuilt and considerable restoration carried out to the rest of the fabric.



## 2 Bells

The original two bells dating from 1703 and 1660 were restored, re-hung in a new cast iron frame, and joined by a new tenor bell in 2008. This new bell was formerly at the St Anne's Monastery, Sutton, near Warrington and dates from 1960. In 2010 a fourth bell was added, formerly of Shiplake, Oxfordshire and dating from 1694 (recast 1902).

The old frame which probably dates from the 17th century has been preserved in the tower with the new frame hung below.

The old wheel & clapper are on display at the ground-level of the tower, on the west wall.

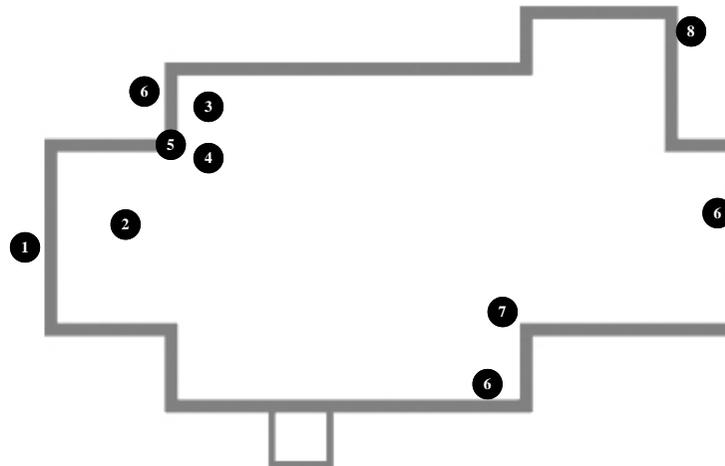


## 1 Niche

The niche on the exterior of the tower dates from the mid-14th century. It has a pedestal on which statues would once have stood and figures of angels still adorn the panels to the left and right and to either side of the finely carved ogee arch above. The whole is a beautiful composition similar to the screen at Southwell Minster and the carving in the chancel at nearby Hawton church. It may well be by the hand of the Master Mason Ivo de Raghton who worked at, amongst other places, Carlisle, York, Beverley, Lincoln, and Southwell between 1317 and 1339.

## 3 North Arcade

The north arcade of three bays with rounded arches is from the transitional period of architecture; when the Norman style was evolving into Early English towards the end of the 12th century. Contrast this with the pointed arches of the south arcade built later when this aisle was added in the early 13th century.



## 4 Poppy Headed Benches

Six benches remain with the distinctive 'fleur de lys'-like ends known as 'poppy head'. These are Victorian copies of medieval carving and may represent what was here before the restoration.



## 7 Pillar Capitals

The nail-head ornament—looking like small pyramids—on two of the pillar capitals dates the arcade to the late 12th / early 13th century.



## 5 Consecration Cross

On the western most pillar of the north arcade you can find carved into the stone a round consecration cross just about level with the top of the pews. Its date is likely to be contemporary with the pillar, ie around 1190.

Consecration crosses are often now eroded, and this is an unusual survival. They were common in the medieval period and provided a visible symbol of Christ's victory as well as providing a defence against demonical powers.

## 6 Glass

All the coloured glass in the church is 19th century. The east window depicts scenes from the life of Christ, as do the two in the south wall of the chancel. These three windows are all by London makers Lavers Barrand & Westlake, 1869.

In the south aisle there is an east window showing St Anne, St Simon, St Agatha, and above, St Paulinus and St Hugh of Lincoln.

The north aisle the west window shows St Helena.



## 8 Re-used Norman Carving

A fragment of Norman stonework has been re-used in the east wall of the vestry above the window on the exterior. It probably formed part of a decorative arch on a window and bears witness to a Norman church on this site.