

# BUCKS CHURCHES IN THE EIGHTEEN-FORTIES

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In the library at Doddershall Park is a book containing thirty-one sketches of Buckinghamshire churches done by Charlotte Pigott in the early eighteen-forties. The Pigotts have been at Doddershall since the early sixteenth century and the present owner, Christopher Prideaux, is the great-great-grandson of Mrs Pigott. She was the daughter of William Lloyd of Aston Hall, Oswestry and Louisa Harvey, whose father was Admiral Elias Harvey who had commanded the 'Fighting Temeraire', next in line to the 'Victory' at Trafalgar.

In 1838 she married, as his second wife, George Pigott (1796-1865). He was the squire of Doddershall in Quainton parish. He had been MP for St Mawes and was described by Lipscomb as 'the present worthy and most respectable representative of this ancient and distinguished family'. Lipscomb was a Quainton boy and it is interesting that four members of the Pigott family were subscribers for his great History.

Sketching was one of the few accomplishments allowed to gentlewomen in the mid nineteenth century. Charlotte was a talented amateur but her technique was erratic. Her sketches have charm but their real interest lies in showing the churches as they were just before the era of Victorian restoration. Many of

the views show little change in the exterior compared with today and it is a pity that she only included four interior views. Of these, Stewkley and Hughenden show something of how gaunt, empty and undecorated were so many churches at the time. Grendon Underwood has been altered but is recognisable today, but Quainton shows perfectly just what the Victorians liked and disliked.

The Pigotts were influential in both these parishes - they had the advowson of Grendon - and there are Pigott tombs in both.

They were too a clerical family. George Pigott's brother was Perpetual Curate of North Marston, a nephew was Vicar of Trentham, Staffordshire, a cousin was Vicar of Hughenden and both his uncle and the latter's son were successively Rectors of Grendon. The last-named, the Revd Randall Pigott, was secretary of the Bucks' Archaeological Society 1884-96. A typical Victorian 'Squarson', he built the large manor house at Grendon, now the centre of the Open Prison.

I am grateful to Christopher Prideaux, the eighth of his family to serve as High Sheriff of Bucks (1991-2) for permission to reproduce these sketches.



Plate 1. Bradenham. From the west. Unchanged.



**Plate 2a.** Ashenden. From the north west. A twelfth-century doorway beneath the left nave window has been unblocked.



**Plate 2b.** Edgcott. From the north east. The left buttress has been rebuilt and the window next to it restored. In 1875 a vestry was built covering the left-hand chancel window.



**Plate 3a.** Chilton. From the east. The artist must have sketched from an upper window of Chilton House. Unchanged.



**Plate 3b.** Chilton. From the south. Unchanged.



**Plate 4a.** Fingest. From the south west. The porch was rebuilt in 1866. On the south side of the tower another small window below the one in the sketch has been opened or re-opened.



**Plate 4b.** Grendon Underwood. From the east. The Pigott rectors altered the east end, replacing the four lancets with a new, more elaborate window and added a vestry on the north side of the chancel.



**Plate 5.** Grendon Underwood. Today, as well as the new east window, an organ has been installed in the north chancel. The Sentences on either side of the chancel arch have gone, together with the box pews. The pulpit is the same but has ceased to be a three-decker and has been moved to the north side.



**Plate 6a.** Great Hampden. From the south west. Unchanged.



**Plate 6b.** Ludgershall. From the south west. Unchanged.



Plate 7a. Hughenden. From the east. A distant view which shows no detail. An elaborate restoration (1874–90) transformed the church and included the addition of a dwarf spire on the tower.



Plate 7b. Hughenden. The visitor today may well be shocked. The rather moving bare austerity of the north chapel with the 'crusader tombs' (which are in fact Tudor fakes) has been lost and the space is stacked with chairs, banners and miscellanea; the tombs are barely visible.



**Plate 8a.** Marsh Gibbon. From the south east. The church has been substantially altered by the building of a very high new chancel in 1860 and the removal of the dome-like structure on top of the tower.



**Plate 8b.** North Marston. From the north east. This fine church has not been altered since the fifteenth century. This must have been one of Mrs Pigott's off-days. Not only are both nave and chancel too low in relation to the tower, and the pinnacles grossly exaggerated but she omitted the north aisle altogether.



Plate 9a. Oakley. From the south east. Little changed. The window facing east on the transept is now taller than it was when drawn.



Plate 9b. Oving. From the south east. Trees have grown up at the artist's viewpoint, but there has been little change to the exterior.



**Plate 10a.** Steeple Claydon. From the east. The drawing is dated 1840 so must have been done just before the prominent brick transept was built two years later. Towards the end of the century a broach spire was added to the mediaeval tower.



**Plate 10b.** Quinton. From the north east. The cottage has gone. A new vestry was built on the north side of the chancel in 1862. Mature trees cover the foreground.



**Plate 11.** Quanton. This is a highly instructive drawing for it shows a typical eighteenth-century interior with all the features which the Victorians so much disliked and – in this case – reordered in the eighteen-seventies.

The east end has one small semi-circular window (of 1771) with the royal cypher of Charles I above and the Sentences below.

There are hatchments high on the north wall and five great monuments are grouped round the chancel. There is a three-decker pulpit and a variety of family box pews.

Today the monuments have been banished to the west end, hatchments, Sentences, pulpit, cypher and box pews all destroyed and in their place a new east window, an organ, a mean pulpit and pitch-pine pews.



**Plate 12.** Stewkley. From the west. It was in the restoration of 1866 that the roofs of both nave and chancel were restored to their original pitch which is here clearly shown on the west face of the tower. A small window was added on the raised west front and the pinnacles on the tower were removed.

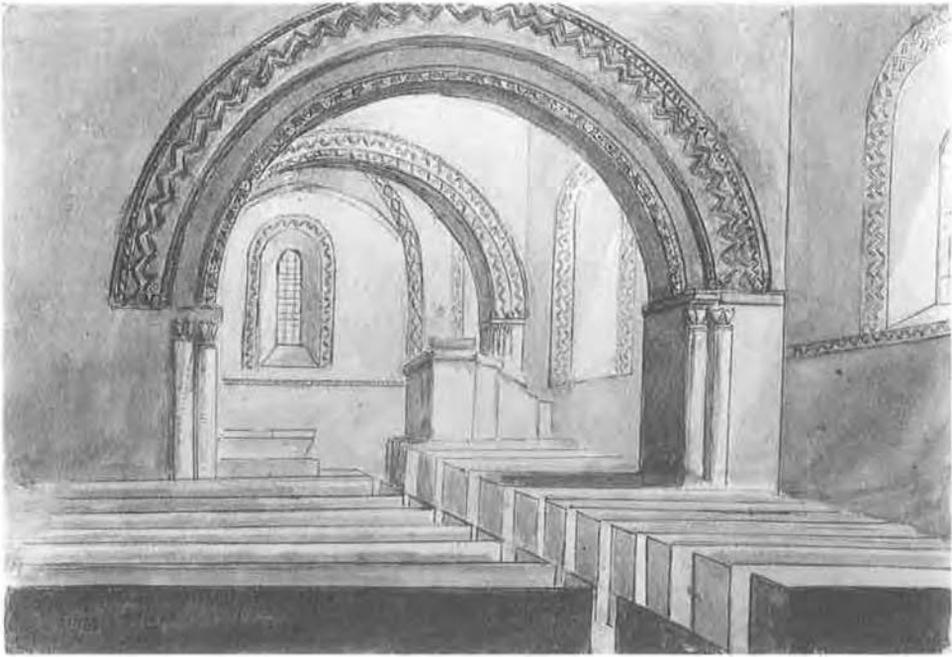


Plate 13a. Stewkley. A contrast to Quainton. Here the Victorian restoration was exceptionally restrained. The priest's desk has gone, the pews are altered and a modest stone pulpit added, otherwise the interior has been virtually unchanged for eight hundred years.



Plate 13b. Pitchcott. From the north west. Unchanged.



**Plate 14a.** Stone. From the north. The trees are now much thicker but otherwise little has changed.



**Plate 14b.** Swanbourne. From the south east. In 1863 the chancel was rebuilt and the pitch of the nave roof raised.



Plate 15a. Upper Winchendon. From the south west. Unchanged.

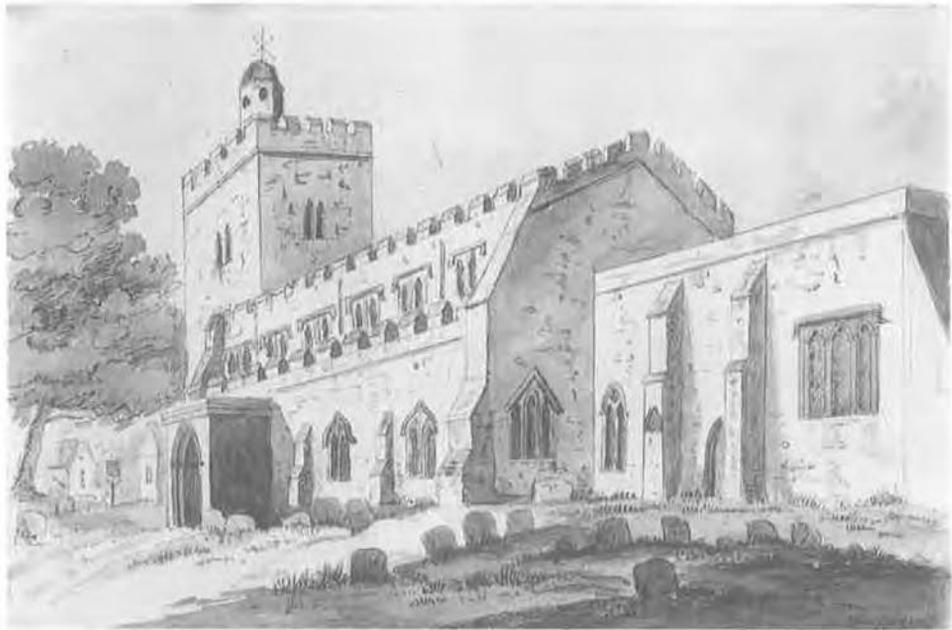


Plate 15b. Waddesdon, From the south east. The turret on the tower has been rebuilt; the buttress at the east end of the south aisle has been altered to carry battlements.



**Plate 16a.** Whaddon. From the south. Unchanged except that the porch has been rebuilt.



**Plate 16b.** Wotton Underwood. From the east. The heavily-buttressed south chapel containing the Grenville tombs was rebuilt by the Duke of Buckingham in 1867. The large east window is now a double lancet.



**Plate 17a.** Stoke Poges. From the east. The spire has gone, otherwise little changed.



**Plate 17b.** Wraysbury. From the east. The church was heavily restored in 1862 with a broach spire replacing its mediaeval predecessor.



**Plate 18.** Charlotte, Mrs George Piggott, of Doddershall Park, whose watercolours are reproduced on the preceding pages.