

ST NICHOLAS CHURCH, WICKHAM

The Church, dedicated to St. Nicholas, is a striking example of a church built upon a large, almost circular mound. It is likely that the mound had been sacred ground for centuries before the current church was built. It is believed that St. Wilfrid dedicated a church here before 670AD.



The present building is Norman and dates from 1120. An earlier west doorway, with its zigzag on the arch, was added later – certainly before or during the reign of King Steven. On the left capital is carved the arms of King Stephen, 1135-1154, (a Centaur with bow and arrow). This capital may have been re-carved to indicate allegiance to King Steven during the civil war between Steven and Matilda, 1139-1154.



Later changes to the church were made in the thirteenth century through the church's association with the Manor of Wickham and the Uvedale family so that by the mid nineteenth century it looked as shown in the illustration here.



The Victorian era saw a fifteen year 'makeover'. The Norman doorway was moved about ten feet to the west and fitted into the new tower, the north transept was rebuilt and the exterior walls clad in flints. The interior also underwent considerable alteration, including the introduction of an organ in the South Chapel and uniform seating.



More recent internal changes took place in the 1950s with alterations to the chancel and creation of the priest's vestry. The organ was moved from the South Chapel to its current position in 1957 and Lady Chapel was re-dedicated in 1961.



The Lady Chapel has been further enhanced with the installation of engraved glass panels and doors and a lighting corona in 2004.



There is the canopied alabaster tomb of the Uvedale family in the south transept and with the effigies of Sir William Uvedale, (Lord of the manor who died in 1615 age 56), and of Mary his wife, daughter of Sir Richard Norton of Tisted.

Sir William is seen above in armour, his wife below. Both are holding prayer books and are dressed in the fashion typical of the Jacobean period. Below them are their children, five girls and four boys.



The church plate, “Wickham Silver”, hallmarked London 1646 and 1647 with silversmith’s initials “WT”, was likely donated by the Uvdale family as was customary at the time. Unfortunately, all records of silversmiths were lost in the Great Fire of London. The pieces were in use in the church up until the 1940’s.

The pieces were sold in 1974 to an American gentleman who had difficulties in getting permission for them to leave the country. He sold them to Hampshire County Council who bought them with the aid of a 50% grant from the Victoria and Albert Museum. For many years they were on display in a gallery in Alton before being removed to the Museum and Archive Service in Winchester.

