

the Hall incorporating parts of an earlier building. About this time a vestry which once stood here was pulled down and the church windows had new plain glass. A vestry is a room in which vestments are kept. On this wall you can see evidence of its width and height, and the blocked 13th century door the Priest used to enter the church.

11 The East Window, 14th century and here's a man sticking his tongue out. This face, like the window and the altar behind, is facing towards the Holy Land. Carvings on churches could be irreverent, like the mooning man. He, like the human faces carved in this church are rare survivors.

Reformers from the reformation onwards took the Second Commandment literally and defaced, as in removing the face, carvings and statues.

12 Medieval stained glass was often removed as it depicted people. In this 14th century window some 15th century glass with acorns, leaves and roses remain. This glass is better viewed inside as it was meant to be.

13 This Lowside Window has lost some height. This is a clue that confirms, that in the first half of the fourteenth century, the Chancel was rebuilt keeping the lower part of its side walls.

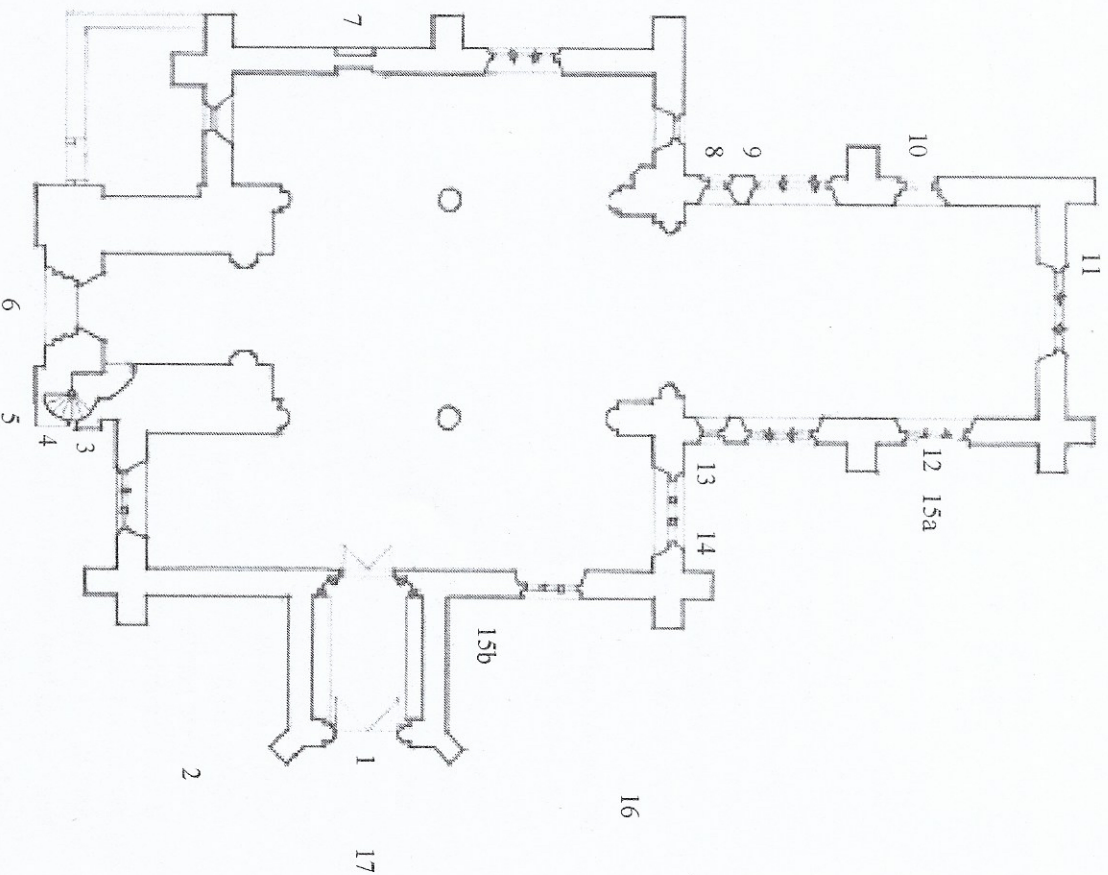
14 Here's the 14th century East Window of the Lady Chapel, with the remains of a splendid altar built into the wall behind. There are fragments of original glass, but the label stops have been completely defaced.

15a and b Here we find former Rectors and their wives laid to rest by the path they would've taken from the Rectory in life. The position and size of the tombs display their wealth and high status. This is in stark contrast to poor, Medieval priests who lie in unmarked graves in the Chancel.

16 Between the meeting of the two paths are the oldest marked graves in the churchyard. At first only the south of the churchyard was hallowed for burial, the north reserved for criminals, bastards and suicides. With the decline in superstition it was all opened up for normal burial. However, the sunny south was the most desirable. Very few examples of grave stones survive from any period earlier than the 17th century. Two large stones are laid flat are of that period, but so weathered we don't know who's there. The gravestone next to these are of Robert and Elizabeth Goodwin who died in 1681 and 1682.

17 Here we end our trail by the gate to the hall. The custom of siting the church close to the hall began in Saxon times when churches were the property of the theign. This private entrance from the hall has been used since those times.

## St. John the Baptist Outside Trail



1 Your tour begins outside the 15th century porch. Look above the Arts and Crafts door and you will see a 17th century sundial. It's accurate when the large Yew tree behind you isn't blocking out the sun. If you read the date on the grave stone at its base it will give you an idea of the Yew's age. The reason that we find Yew trees so universally planted in our churchyards was because it was thought to be a symbol of immortality, the tree being so lasting and always green. In some parts of England, a branch of an evergreen is still thrown into the grave. "My shroud of white, stuck all with yew." Shakespeare.

2 If you look up you can see the clock, built by S. Smith and Sons of Derby, that runs for seven days. It strikes on the hour and has a pinwheel escapement giving excellent time keeping. One dial faces the Hall so its owner could keep a check on the time, whilst a second dial, some 15 ft higher, faces south so it can be seen from the Rectory. It replaced a 17th century wooden clock made by John Watts of Stamford. That clock had a square dial mounted, vertical diagonal and faced the Hall. It would have required daily winding which doubtless hastened its replacement.

3 Below the window, to the left on the ground, there's a grill covering a shaft. A drain it's not, but a vent. During the 1780s the south aisle was extended to provide a family chapel and burial vault for the Frewin-Turner family, who then lived at Cold Overton Hall. After the Reformation the wealthy paid to be buried inside churches. However, the decaying bodies made things rather unpleasant for the congregation. This gave rise to the term, 'the stinking rich.' Here a vent was built from the vault below to take the smell outside.

4 The green copper strip goes from the top of the spire to the ground. It's a lightning conductor designed to take the power from a lightning strike safely to the earth. If you look carefully at the top of the spire, it's a lighter stone. This is because in 1900 the spire was hit by lightning and had to be rebuilt.

It was rebuilt with a weather vane in the shape of a cock. The bird is a symbol of St. Peter. A cock crew after St. Peter had denied three times that he was a friend of Jesus. One of the oldest weathercocks is Cock Peter on Oakham church. English soldiers passed it on their way to the Battle of Agincourt.

5 It's rare for there to be carvings at the base of a tower. They date from the 15th century when the richly decorated tower, with parapet spire was built. If you study the fine carvings at its base and above you will agree

that they are special. They're the work of an East Midlands "School" of carving, probably members of a masons' guild, based in Oakham. One of our carvings above is missing. This was likely to have been a mooning man, a signature carving of these masons.

These carvings, and any others on this church are not gargoyles. Gargoyles are carved figures, often a grotesque, that disguise a water pipe.

6 If you look at the heads either side of the tower door, you'll notice their colour doesn't match the rest of the arch. This is because they're not made of carved stone, but Coade Stone: an artificial material resembling stone but actually a form of terracotta, produced c. 1770 - 1840 to a recipe developed by Mrs. Eleanor Coade at a factory site now underneath the Royal Festival Hall on London's South Bank. The 'stone' proved to be exceptionally hard-wearing, whether used for internal or external work, and architectural features made from it are frequently as crisp today as they were two hundred years ago.

You'll also notice that this door, and all other doors and windows, have a projecting moulding intended to throw off rain water. These are dripstones and their decorative ends, like these heads, are label stops.

7 You're at The Devil's Door. Most, like this 13th century door, are blocked or bricked up and no longer in use. They were once left open at baptism to allow the child's evil spirits to leave. It was also used for processions at the same service, and at funerals.

8 Lowside Window: a window frequently found towards the west in the south wall of the chancel, and much more rarely here in the north wall, which begins lower than the other windows. Theories about its purpose have included that it was intended to enable lepers or others not permitted to enter the church, to partake in the Eucharist (hence it was sometimes called a leper's window), or that it was to allow the ringing of the Sanctus bell to be heard outside. In fact, the position of some lowside windows seems to make either of these functions unlikely.

We have two, both 13th century, which is rare. Look carefully at this one, and we will be stopping at the other on the south wall.

9 On the window to your left is Erik the Owl. He's a simple yet beautiful 14th century label stop carving. In the Bestiary, a medieval book with allegorical descriptions of animals, the world itself was the Word of God. In the Bestiary, the owl represents the Jews who showed that they preferred darkness to light when they rejected Christ.

10 John St. John purchased the Manor of Cold Overton in 1629 and built