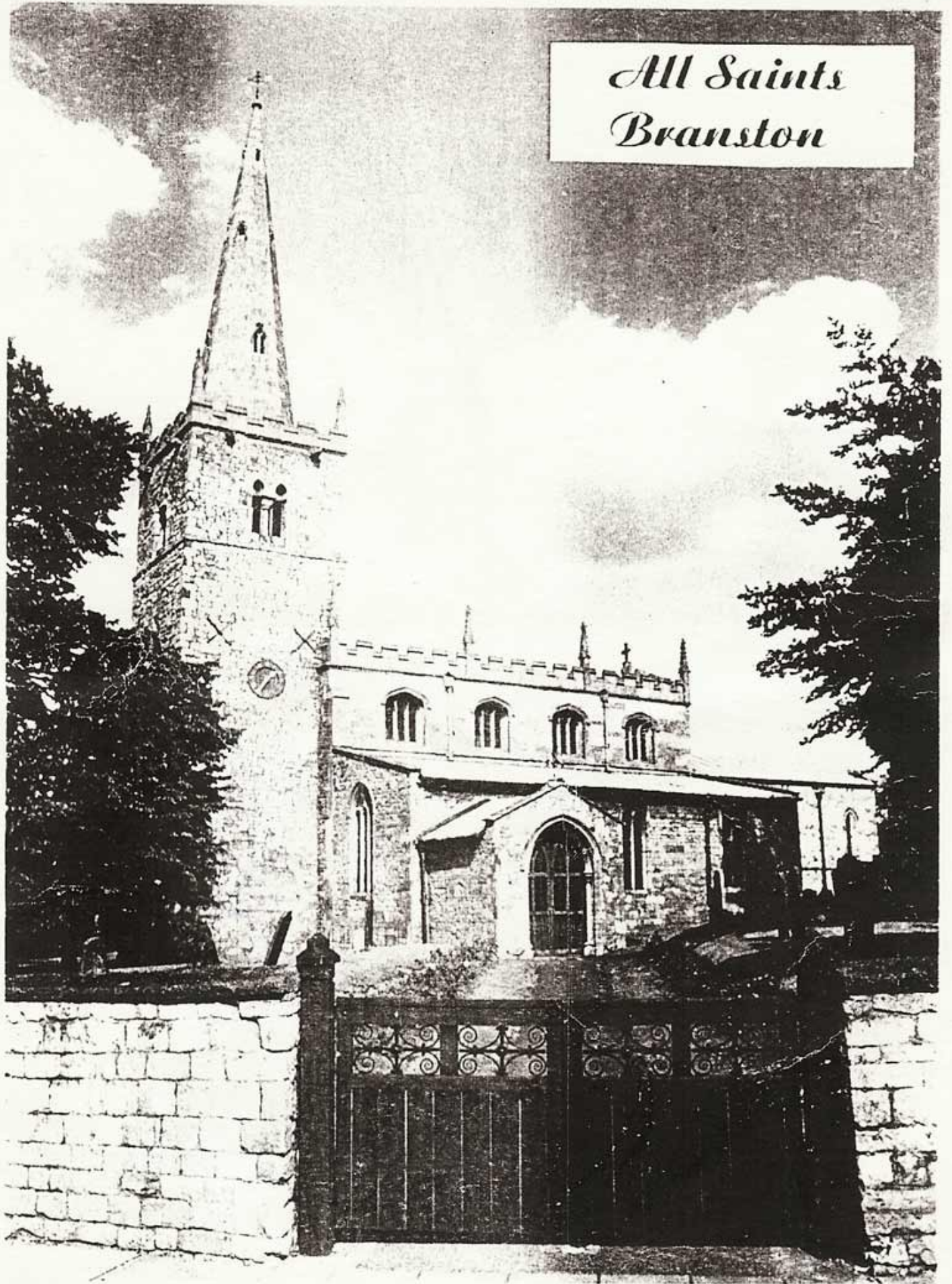


*All Saints  
Branston*





## ALL SAINTS CHURCH, BRANSTON

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All Saints Church, Branston, may be described as a church of many centuries. The south-west corner of the tower shows very plainly the "long and short work" typical of the Anglo-Saxon period. The west door is probably early Norman, but still showing Anglo-Saxon influence in its narrowness.

Almost every period of church architecture is to be seen inside the church — the nave arcade Early English and the south aisle Decorated, while the outer north aisle, along with the present choir vestry were built on to the church in what might almost be called a north transept in 1830 as a school for boys and girls, but restored in their present form by Sir Giles Gilbert Scott in 1876. The chancel, originally Early English, which was destroyed by fire in 1962, now displays the striking chancel arch designed by Mr. George Gaze Pace, Consultant Architect to numerous cathedrals, while the wide east window, the gift of Major D. Abel-Smith, was designed and made by Mr. Keith New. So the church really ranges from the 11th to the 20th century.

It is well worth while to stand under the organ gallery at the west end of the church and look right down to the chancel so as to appreciate fully the beauty of the chancel itself. The arches of the nave arcade still show the blackening of the disastrous fire, which started on Christmas Day, 1962, apparently in the electrical mechanism of the organ, at that time sited on the north side of the chancel.

Now come out into the central aisle and look back at the organ. The placing of it in its present gallery and also its specification were planned by Dr. W. L. Sumner of Nottingham University, and the organ was built by Messrs. Cousans (Lincoln) Ltd. On the front of it you see the 19th century Royal Arms and also carved panels of the saints, which were originally designed and made in 1860 by Miss Curtois, daughter of the then rector, and added to the chancel screen made by her father. The panels were fortunately saved from the fire.

The central aisle's flooring is mainly of memorial slabs to members of the family of Sir Humphrey Winche, who was a Commissioner of the Admiralty. The seating in the nave is in benches, all with identical poppy-heads and with only two main variations in pattern, apart from a very few individual carvings — Lincolnshire bagpipes, a fox, a chained bear and two women. The roof of the nave is decorated with golden angels and golden bosses. The original roof was destroyed in the fire of 1962, but the angels were merely charred — too charred to return, but still keeping their shape sufficiently to have plaster casts made of them. These were gilded and added to the present roof. The modern electric lighting is in very attractive groups of lamps.

The 13th century font is at the east end of the nave, below the east



window of the south aisle. The pulpit is of the 20th century, while the 19th century brass lectern is in front of the northern base of the chancel arch.

The plain wrought-iron and oak altar rail stretches across the chancel and most of the north chancel transept. The priests' stalls of plain oak are placed at the front of the chancel, one at either side. The plain oak altar table stands in the centre, with a tall wrought-iron candle-holder to north and south. Behind the altar stands a wrought-iron cross, somewhat reminiscent of the cross in the new Coventry Cathedral. Below the gorgeously coloured east window are three oak seats. The lancet windows in the south and north walls of the chancel have been restored, while the aumbry, piscina and sedilia were not damaged.

Just inside the altar rail in the transept portion of the chancel is the oldest sepulchral slab in the church — a slab of Purbeck marble showing a foliated cross. Round the outer edge runs an inscription in Norman-French — "Sir Richard de Thistleton jadis de bette eglise person" (formerly parson of this church). He was rector from 1293 to 1309. Beyond this is the doorway to the choir vestry.

At the eastern end of the north wall is a fine memorial on lions' feet, with arms in a roundel, to Lord Vere Bertie (the family name of the Earls of Ancaster) dated 1770. In one of the windows is some 15th century Continental stained glass. Most of the north transept is taken up with the console of the organ, the choir stalls, and behind them a space for the junior Sunday school. Towards the west end, near the door to the priest's vestry, is a memorial to Sir Cecil Wray and his wife, dated 1736. Professor Pevsner says: "to the left and right are busts with fat and phlegmatic faces."

Now you are back at the organ again, and the tower arch and the ringing chamber surrounded with Norman walls. There were originally only four bells in the peal in the 16th century, but two more were added in the 19th century.

Now return to the south porch, where the inner door is what was the 14th century outer door, re-set to make for better exclusion of draughts. The porch itself, like the adjacent south aisle, is of the 14th century.

Going outside, note a small stone with a representation of the crucifixion in the west wall of the porch. See too the long and short work on the corner of the tower and the early Norman west door, also an unfinished round-headed doorway in the south wall, filled in again before completion.

The twin belfry windows with mid-wall shafts in the tower date from Anglo-Saxon or very early Norman times. The spire is of the Perpendicular period (15th century), not crocketed, and with three tiers of lucarnes. The spire, along with the tower, had to be restored in 1895 and again in 1937. The clock was given as a "village clock" by Captain Leslie-Melville in 1888.

Just across the road from the church gate is a large Georgian house — one of several successive homes of the Curtois family, a family unique in that they served as rectors of the church continuously from 1680 to 1891 — a period of 211 years.