

## Religious History

### Origins

The earliest documentary evidence for a church at Coston is from c.1080, when Henry de Ferrers endowed his new foundation of Tutbury Priory (Staffs.) with land and income including two-thirds of the tithes from his demesne at Coston, with the remainder reserved to Coston church.<sup>1</sup> The window in the west wall of the nave is stylistically from this period, suggesting that a stone church was built on the present site by Henry de Ferrers in the 1070s.

The dedication, to St Andrew, is first recorded in 1523 when William Greyn (Green) in his will requested burial 'in the church yard of saynt Andrew of coston'.<sup>2</sup> In 1535, Coston's rector William Marshall requested burial in the chancel of St Andrew, Coston.<sup>3</sup> The dedication continues to be to St Andrew in 2021.

### Benefice

Coston was an ancient parish with its own church and priest, with no separate chapelries in 1220.<sup>4</sup> Originally part of the diocese of Lincoln, the parish became part of the diocese of Peterborough in 1837, and part of the re-established diocese of Leicester in 1926.<sup>5</sup>

The population fell during the agricultural depression of the late 19th century. Following the resignation of Coston's rector in 1909, the Revd John Denny Gedge, the Ecclesiastical Commissioners considered uniting the benefice of Coston with that of its neighbour Garthorpe. The majority of land in both villages was owned by the earl of Dysart, who was patron of Garthorpe, but the Lord Chancellor, who exercised the patronage of Coston on behalf of the Crown, 'would not hear of it, as he does not approve of pluralities'.<sup>6</sup> The union of these two benefices was achieved in 1929, when the living of Coston was again vacant and the Lord Chancellor's office had changed hands, to create the united benefice of Garthorpe and Coston.<sup>7</sup>

The benefices across this sparsely populated rural area were rearranged several times from the late 20th century. The united benefice of Garthorpe and Coston was dissolved in 1954. Garthorpe became part of the newly-formed united benefice of Saxby cum Stapleford, Garthorpe and Wyfordby, and Coston became part of the united benefice of Sproxton with Saltby and Coston.<sup>8</sup> This division presumably had an ecclesiastical logic, but cut through a civil parish, as Coston and Garthorpe had been united into a single civil parish in 1936.<sup>9</sup> The united benefice of Sproxton with Saltby and Coston was dissolved in 1974 and Coston became part of the new benefice of

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<sup>1</sup> A. Saltman, *The Cartulary of Tutbury Priory* (Collections for a History of Staffordshire, 4th ser. vol. IV, Stafford, 1962), 62–3; *Victoria County History: Staffordshire*, III, p. 331.

<sup>2</sup> ROLLR, PR/1/251, W&I 1515–26, ff.264-264v.

<sup>3</sup> ROLLR, W & I file 1535, f. 27B

<sup>4</sup> W. P. W. Phillimore (ed.), *The Rolls of Hugh Wells, Bishop of Lincoln 1209-1235* Volume 1 (vol 3 of Lincs Rec Soc, 1912), p. 267.

<sup>5</sup> *London Gaz.*, 12 Sept. 1837, 2397–8; 12 Nov. 1926, 7321–2.

<sup>6</sup> Lambeth Palace Libr., QAB/7/4/1/3268, letter 8 Apr. 1910.

<sup>7</sup> *London Gaz.*, 8 Nov. 1929, 7191–2.

<sup>8</sup> *London Gaz.*, 16 Apr. 1954, 2285–6.

<sup>9</sup> Youngs, *Admin Units*, II, 224, 226.

Buckminster with Sewstern, Sproxton and Coston.<sup>10</sup> This was dissolved in 1984 to create the benefice of Wymondham with Edmondthorpe, Buckminster with Sewstern, Coston and Garthorpe.<sup>11</sup> Further enlargement in 2005–6 added the parishes of Wyfordby and Saxby with Stapleford to create the large benefice of South Framland, which included nine villages across an area of 6,578 ha. (16,254 a.), which cut across the boundaries of some civil parishes.<sup>12</sup>

The Rev. David Cowie was appointed priest-in-charge (rector designate) of the two benefices of South Framland and High Framland in 2017, possibly in anticipation of a merger of these two large benefices. The latter comprised the churches of Branston, Croxton Kerrial, Harston, Knipton, Saltby and Sproxton, and together these benefices covered c.12,000 ha. (29,650 a.).<sup>13</sup> He remained priest-in-charge of this large area in 2021.

## Advowson

The manor of Coston was held by Henry de Ferrers in 1086,<sup>14</sup> and he can be assumed to have held the advowson of the church.<sup>15</sup> The advowson would have passed with the manor to Henry's descendants at least as far as William Ferrers, 4th earl of Derby, whose father, also William, died in 1190.<sup>16</sup>

A charter of William Ferrers, 4th earl, c.1200, gave the churches of Stapleford and Coston to Tutbury priory,<sup>17</sup> a gift that would effectively have transferred the advowson to the priory, and Nichols records the prior of Tutbury as the holder of the advowson between 1250 and 1534.<sup>18</sup> It is possible that the priors never, or only rarely, exercised their right of presentation, or were content to leave the choice to the Ferrers family as their local representatives. The manor of Coston was given by Robert de Ferrers, 6th earl of Derby, to Thomas Berkeley, 1st baron Berkeley c.1260, on his marriage to Robert's sister Joan.<sup>19</sup> Thomas and Joan presented Osbert de Bereford to the living in 1277, saying they had recovered the advowson from Edmund, the king's brother (Edmund Crouchback, 1st earl of Leicester, 1st earl of Lancaster), which had been forfeited by Robert de Ferrers to the king in 1266, following Robert's rebellion against the Crown that year.<sup>20</sup> Thomas Berkeley presented to the living in 1338,<sup>21</sup> and it was claimed that Thomas Berkeley held the advowson at his death in 1417 'as of fee of the Earl Marshal'.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>10</sup> *London Gaz.*, 28 May 1974, 6371; Saltby was added to Waltham-on-the-Wolds and Stonesby to create another new benefice.

<sup>11</sup> *Leic. Dioc. Year Bk*, 1983, 83; 1984–5, 41.

<sup>12</sup> *Leic. Dioc. Year Bk*, 2004, 33; 2005–6, 40.

<sup>13</sup> *Church Times*, 5 May 2017.

<sup>14</sup> *Domesday*, 636.

<sup>15</sup> Saltman, *The Cartulary*, 62–3.

<sup>16</sup> See Land Ownership; also *VCH Staffs*. X, 10–12.

<sup>17</sup> Saltman, *The Cartulary*, 70.

<sup>18</sup> J. Nichols, *The History and Antiquities of the County of Leicester*, II, 145.

<sup>19</sup> B. Wells-Furby (ed.), *Catalogue of the Medieval Muniments at Berkeley Castle* (Bristol and Gloucs. Archaeological Society, XVII, 2004), I, xxxiv–v, 507 (A2/57/1; SC 369)

<sup>20</sup> F.N. Davis (ed.), *The Rolls of Richard Gravesend, Bishop; of Lincoln*, 1258–1279

(Lincoln Record Society vol 20, 1925), p. 160; *ODNB*, s.v., Ferrers, Robert de, sixth earl of Derby (c. 1239–1279), magnate and rebel (accessed 5 Apr. 2021).

<sup>21</sup> Nicholas Bennett (ed.), *The Registers of Bishop Henry Burghersh 1320–1342*, vol. I (Lincoln Record Society 87, 1999), p. 142

<sup>22</sup> *Cal. Inq. p.m.* online at <https://inquisitionspostmortem.ac.uk/view/inquisition/20-805/816>.

From the mid 16th century the Berkeley family, who continued to hold the manor, appear to have given up any claim to the advowson. The Crown presented Robert Johnson as rector in 1546, Richard Ives in 1550, Thomas Bentley and George Chapman, both in 1554, Thomas Marsar in 1556, Thomas Washington in 1558 and Gilbert Wetherall in 1560.<sup>23</sup> Later presentations were also made by the Crown, for example in 1576 and 1603, and Crown patronage was recorded at a visitation in 1832.<sup>24</sup> These presentations would be consistent with the advowson coming into the king's hands on the dissolution of Tutbury priory.

Following the union of the benefices of Coston and Garthorpe in 1929, the right of presentation was exercised alternately by the Lord Chancellor, for the Crown, and the earl of Dysart, who had held the advowson of Garthorpe.<sup>25</sup> Upon the dissolution of the united benefice in 1954, the patronage was divided along the original lines, with that of Garthorpe reverting to Sir Cecil Lyonel Tollemache, the heir of Lord Dysart, and that of Coston reverting to the Crown, and exercised by the Lord Chancellor. Presentations from 1954 to the new united benefice of Sproxton with Saltby and Coston were made alternately by the Lord Chancellor, as patron of Coston, and the duke of Rutland as patron of Sproxton with Saltby.<sup>26</sup> A complex exchange of rights of presentation between the diocese and the Crown in 1957 involving ten benefices substituted, in the case of this benefice, the bishop of Leicester for the Lord Chancellor, who would present alternately with the duke of Rutland.<sup>27</sup>

Following the further rearrangement of benefices in 1974, Major-General Sir Humphry Tollemache (patron of Buckminster and Sewstern) became the sole patron of the new benefice of Buckminster with Sewstern, Sproxton and Coston.<sup>28</sup> The enlargement of the benefice in 1984 added the Lord Chancellor to the advowson as patron of the incoming churches, who would present alternately with Major-General Sir Humphry Tollemache.<sup>29</sup> The right of presentation was suspended in 2013 for 'up to five years'.<sup>30</sup>

## Income

The church's income was reduced c.1080 through the foundation charter of Tutbury priory, in which Henry de Ferrers endowed the priory with two-thirds of his demesne tithes at Coston, reserving one third for Coston church.<sup>31</sup> This may have been amended later, as the bishop's confirmation (1094–1123) approves an endowment of five-sixths of the demesne tithes.<sup>32</sup> A later prior understood the gift to be five sheaves of corn and all small tithes.<sup>33</sup> One result of this endowment was that Coston

<sup>23</sup> <https://theclergydatabase.org.uk/> (accessed 25 June 2021; *Cal. Pat. Edward VI*, III, 325; *Cal. Pat.* 1553–4, 41, 358; *Cal. Pat.* 1556–7, 503; *Cal. Pat.* 1557–8, 246.

<sup>24</sup> C.W. Foster (ed.), *The State of the Church in the Reigns of Elizabeth and James I, as illustrated by documents relating to the Diocese of Lincoln*, Volume I (Lincoln Record Society, volume 23, 1926), 43, 288; ROLLR, 245:50/5, p. 49.

<sup>25</sup> *London Gaz.*, 8 Nov. 1929, 7191–2.

<sup>26</sup> *London Gaz.*, 16 Apr. 1954, 2285–6; *Leicester Diocesan Calendar, Clergy List and Year Book* (Leicester, 1955), 99.

<sup>27</sup> *London Gaz.*, 17 Dec. 1957, 7359.

<sup>28</sup> *London Gaz.*, 28 May 1974, 6371; *Leicester Diocesan Calendar and Directory* (Leicester, 1975), 75.

<sup>29</sup> *Leicester Diocesan Directory*, 1984–5, 80.

<sup>30</sup> Notice in porch of Buckminster church seen by author in 2015.

<sup>31</sup> Saltman, *The Cartulary*, 62–3.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 40; W. P. W. Phillimore (ed.), *The Rolls of Hugh Wells, Bishop of Lincoln 1209-1235* Volume 1 (vol 3 of Lincs Rec Soc, 1912), 267.

<sup>33</sup>

church was only assessed at 5 marks in a taxation of the 1250s, well below the average for north-east Leicestershire.<sup>34</sup> The taxation of 1291 records tax of £17 6s. 8d., of which £1 6s. 8d. related to the portion belonging to the prior of Tutbury.<sup>35</sup> The income in 1526 was said to be £13 5s.,<sup>36</sup> and the church was said to be worth £16 6s. 3¼d. in 1535.<sup>37</sup> The portion of demesne tithes originally given to Tutbury priory was granted in 1572 to Sir Christopher Hatton, one of the queen's Band of Gentlemen Pensioners.<sup>38</sup>

The glebe land had been enclosed by 1674,<sup>39</sup> with the acreage variously estimated as between 33 and 37 a. in the 17th, 18th and early 19th centuries.<sup>40</sup> In 1690 the rector also received £80 annually from Sir Charles Tufton's estate (lord of the manor), settled by a decree in Chancery, and all tithes across the parish.<sup>41</sup> The tithes returned between £230 and £240 annually in 1842.<sup>42</sup>

In 1917 the tithe rent charge at Coston provided £294, and a further £20 was received by letting the glebe land.<sup>43</sup> An annual pension of £30 from this income had been agreed to Reverend Gedge in 1909, following his retirement, and £20 annually to all future incumbents for life, if they retired from this living.<sup>44</sup> The income belonging to the benefices of Coston and Garthorpe was combined when the united benefice was created in 1929. The division, on the dissolution of that united benefice in 1954, attached 4.5 a. of glebe land to Coston with the income on an investment of £8,385 18s. 2d. held by the Church Commissioners, then returning £267 annually.<sup>45</sup>

## Rectory house

A house of six bays, barn of three bays and coal house of three bays was recorded in 1690, standing in grounds of three roods.<sup>46</sup> By 1697 the coal house had become a stable and outhouse, and the grounds included an orchard.<sup>47</sup> The house was said to have been repaired 'sufficiently and substantially' in 1777,<sup>48</sup> but was in 'a very dilapidated state' in 1796.<sup>49</sup>

The rector, the Rev. Charles Kipling, borrowed £500 from the commissioners of Queen Anne's Bounty in 1823 to improve the house.<sup>50</sup> The property was described by archdeacon Bonney in 1832 as almost new and in good order, although the curate, who was living there, said that some parts of it were not in a good state.<sup>51</sup> Kipling died in 1841. His successor, the Hon. and Rev. John Sandilands,

<sup>34</sup> W. P. W. Phillimore (ed.), *The Rolls of Hugh Wells, Bishop of Lincoln 1209-1235* Volume 1 (vol 3 of Lincs Rec Soc, 1912), 276.

<sup>35</sup> *Taxatio*, 65.

<sup>36</sup> H.E. Salter (ed.), *A Subsidy Collected in the Diocese of Lincoln in 1526* (Oxford, 1909), p. 98

<sup>37</sup> *Valor Eccl.*, 155.

<sup>38</sup> *Cal. Pat.* 1569-72, p. 486.

<sup>39</sup> ROLLR, 1D 41/2/164.

<sup>40</sup> ROLLR, 1D 41/2/164; 1D 41/2/165; TNA, IR 18/4428.

<sup>41</sup> ROLLR, 1D 41/2/165.

<sup>42</sup> TNA, IR 18/4428.

<sup>43</sup> Lambeth Palace Libr., QAB/7/4/1/3268, statement of income.

<sup>44</sup> *London Gaz.*, 12 Nov 1909, 8357.

<sup>45</sup> *London Gaz.*, 16 Apr. 1954, 2285-6.

<sup>46</sup> ROLLR, 1D 41/2/165.

<sup>47</sup> ROLLR, 1D 41/2/166.

<sup>48</sup> ROLLR, 1D 41/18/21, p. 251.

<sup>49</sup> ROLLR, 1D 41/18/22, p. 253.

<sup>50</sup> Lambeth Palace Libr., QAB/7/4/1/3268, listed in questionnaire of 1929.

<sup>51</sup> ROLLR, 245'50/5, p. 52.

claimed the house was unfit for habitation and obtained two further loans from the commissioners, of £534 in 1841 and £418 9s. in 1847, for improvements to this property.<sup>52</sup> The alterations of 1841 increased the size of the library by moving the butler's storage into the kitchen, which became a pantry, and providing a new kitchen in an extension to the rear. The front of the house was also upgraded through the addition of a portico, pilasters at each end of the building and a parapet at roof level. The second loan added an upper floor above the kitchen and over a new rear extension.<sup>53</sup> The governors of Queen Anne's Bounty thought these changes were 'unnecessary' and intended to make an already adequate house more comfortable.<sup>54</sup>

Coston's rector in 1909, Reverend John Denny Gedge, considered the house to be too large and expensive for any incumbent without a private income. It had three sitting rooms, two drawing rooms, six bedrooms on the first floor, another five bedrooms in the attic, and an 'elaborate system of [water] pipes, pumps. &c'. Standing in grounds of 1.5 a., the outbuildings comprised two coach houses, two stables, a 'farmer's room' and a former cart stable which had been converted to provide a parish room. He thought it was too large to find a buyer, but believed that its position in 'hunting country' would enable it to be 'let well'.<sup>55</sup>

Upon the union of the benefices of Coston and Garthorpe in 1929, the vicarage at Garthorpe became the parsonage for the United benefice.<sup>56</sup> This was the smaller of the two properties, with two sitting rooms and four bedrooms.<sup>57</sup> Coston rectory was put up for sale by the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, who agreed in 1934 that sale proceeds of £500 could be put towards the cost of restoration work needed on the church.<sup>58</sup> It appears not to have been sold at this time, as the Ecclesiastical Commissioners agreed a grant of £275 in 1937 to improve this property, against a matching benefaction.<sup>59</sup> It was presumably purchased by the Buckminster Estate shortly afterwards, and was occupied by Captain Cecil Herbert Tollemache MBE and his wife Elizabeth at the time of her death in 1942.<sup>60</sup> Captain Tollemache remarried in 1947, and moved away,<sup>61</sup> and in 1950 the property had stood empty for a number of years.<sup>62</sup> It is believed to have been demolished in the 1960s.

## Church Life before the Reformation

Osbert of Barford, resident in the diocese of Carlisle, was installed as subdeacon in 1277,<sup>63</sup> and had become rector by 1293, when a request was made that the living should not longer be sequestered

<sup>52</sup> Lambeth Palace Libr., QAB/7/4/1/3268, listed in questionnaire of 1929.

<sup>53</sup> ROLLR, 1D 69/6–7.

<sup>54</sup> S. Harratt, 'Queen Anne's Bounty and the augmentation of Leicestershire livings in the age of reform', *Trans LAHS* 61 (1987), 13–14, citing ROLLR, 1D 67/7, 1.

<sup>55</sup> Lambeth Palace Libr., QAB/7/4/1/3268, certificate, May 1909; letter 8 April 1910.

<sup>56</sup> *London Gaz.*, 8 Nov. 1929, 7191–2.

<sup>57</sup> Lambeth Palace Libr., QAB/7/4/1/3268, certificate, May 1909.

<sup>58</sup> *Grantham Jnl*, 18 Aug. 1934.

<sup>59</sup> *London Gaz.*, 29 Oct. 1937, 6730, 6734.

<sup>60</sup> *Grantham Jnl*, 27 Nov. 1942.

<sup>61</sup> <https://livesofthefirstworldwar.iwm.org.uk/lifestory/4464322> (accessed 17 Apr. 2021).

<sup>62</sup> *Leic. Eve. Mail*, 15 Apr. 1950.

<sup>63</sup> F.N. Davis (ed.), *The Rolls of Richard Gravesend, Bishop; of Lincoln*, 1258-1279 (Lincoln Record Society vol 20, 1925), p. 160



for his non residence.<sup>64</sup> Two priests were recorded in 1377, the rector and one other, both named William.<sup>65</sup> John Play, the rector in 1416, was licensed for two years' non-residence in 1416, and a further two years in 1418, for study.<sup>66</sup> Only one priest paid tax here in 1526.<sup>67</sup>

Few wills survive for this small village, but in 1535 Coston's rector, William Marshall, left 6s. 8d. in his will towards the 'gyldinge of the Rode loft'.<sup>68</sup> The return to the Chantry Commissioners of goods held in 1552 listed three bells, two vestments, a cope and a silver chalice.<sup>69</sup> No record of any chantry survives, but in 1575 the Crown granted lands in Coston which had been concealed from the commissions and had been given to the church to keep a candle burning.<sup>70</sup>



St Andrew's Church

## Church Life since the Reformation

A description of the church survives from 1639, when instructions were left with the churchwardens that the seat belonging to 'the Hall' was to be cut down and reduced to a height of four feet, and a new partition was to be made between the church and chancel. The walls were to be painted, other

<sup>64</sup> M. T. Hill (ed.), *The Rolls and Register of Bishop Oliver Sutton 1280-1299*, vol. IV (Lincoln Record Society, volume 52, 1958), p. 74

<sup>65</sup> A.K. McHardy (ed.), *Clerical Poll Taxes of the Diocese of Lincoln 1377-1381* (Lincoln Record Society, volume 81, 1992), p. 14

<sup>66</sup> M. Archer (ed.), *The Register of Bishop Philip Repingdon, 1405-1419*, vol III (Lincoln Record Society, volume 74, 1982), 88, 100, 132, 149, 231.

<sup>67</sup> H.E. Salter (ed.), *A Subsidy Collected in the Diocese of Lincoln in 1526* (Oxford, 1909), p. 98

<sup>68</sup> ROLLR, W&I file 27B.

<sup>69</sup> TNA, E 117/11/43/23.

<sup>70</sup> *Cal. Pat.* 1572-75 (Eliz. I, VI), p. 410.

seats mended and a new pulpit made, with the reading desk to be joined to it and both painted green. A new cover was also required for the font, with a spire, and painted.<sup>71</sup>

Given the Crown patronage it was inevitable that the rector, the Rev. Edward Heron, would support the king in the Civil War. He stayed within the Royalist garrison at Belvoir Castle for 'about two years', employing nine short-term curates over that period, and making his escape from Belvoir when Parliamentary soldiers stormed the stables in 1646. He was called before the county Parliamentary committee, where he stood charged with staying in the garrison, spying on and plotting against parliamentary supporters and employing 'scandalous' curates, including a wheelwright, a tanner and the father of an illegitimate child that was murdered by its mother. Heron denied everything except staying at Belvoir.<sup>72</sup>

The Rev. John Lowthorp, instituted as rector in 1686, resigned his living in 1689 as a non-juror.<sup>73</sup> His successor, the Rev. Timothy Thorp, was resident in the parish and held a service in the church every Sunday and on holy days, and held five communion services each year, with 50 parishioners receiving at Easter and 30 at other times.<sup>74</sup> He was highly regarded by his parishioners, with the entry in the parish registers for his burial in 1736 noting that 'his Death was very much regretted by all that knew him ... he was Charitable without Ostentation; Courteous without Guile; and Pious without Hypocrisy'.<sup>75</sup>

There was no resident minister in 1777. A visitation that year required the creed, lord's prayer, ten commandments and king's arms to be displayed.<sup>76</sup> A board painted with the king's arms was purchased in 1780 for 3 guineas,<sup>77</sup> and this board, also painted with the year it was commissioned, remained in the church in 2021.

The rector in 1832, the Rev. Charles Kipling, did not live in Coston, but he employed the Rev. Pickford as curate, who resided in the rectory. There was one service every Sunday, and four communions annually.<sup>78</sup> The chancel contained a stove,<sup>79</sup> which suggests it may also have contained a 'squire's pew'. In 1842 the minister, now the Hon. and Rev. John Sandilands, was also non-resident, but the rectory house was under repair.<sup>80</sup> There was one service every Sunday, but the number of communions had reduced to three annually. The church appears to have been damp – the walls were green with algae, and the font was 'very green', the floor was 'old and uneven', the reading desk was 'old and bad' and the pulpit was 'old and painted blue' (or perhaps a faded green), but had a 'handsome' sounding board.<sup>81</sup> The seating was partly in pews arranged in squares, and partly on benches facing east. Some of the pews were considered by the inhabitants to 'belong' to particular

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<sup>71</sup> ROLLR, 1D 41/18/10, f. 27v.

<sup>72</sup> A.G. Matthews, *Walker Revised*, 236; Fiona McCall, 'Scandalous and malignant? Settling scores against the Leicestershire clergy after the first Civil War', *Midland History*, 40:2 (2015), 224, 239; Bodl. Libr., Walker MS, C 11, f. 54v-55r.

<sup>73</sup> J.H. Overton, *The Nonjurors: their Lives, Principles, and Writings* (London, 1902), 485.

<sup>74</sup> J. Broad (ed.), *Bishop Wake's Summary of Visitation Returns from the Diocese of Lincoln 1706–1715* (Oxford, 2012), II, 758.

<sup>75</sup> ROLLR, DE 1206/1.

<sup>76</sup> ROLLR, 1D 41/18/21, p. 251.

<sup>77</sup> ROLLR, DE 1206/23.

<sup>78</sup> ROLLR. 245'50/5, pp. 49, 52.

<sup>79</sup> ROLLR. 245'50/5, p. 51.

<sup>80</sup> ROLLR, 245'50/9, p. 82; above, Rectory House.

<sup>81</sup> ROLLR, 245'50/9, p. 81.

houses in the village, with one house having two pews, one for the family and another for their servants.<sup>82</sup> A rough sketch of the body of the church in 1846 shows a combined 'double-decker' pulpit and reading desk at the north-east end of the nave, and the font at the north-west of the nave.<sup>83</sup> The Hon. and Rev. Sandilands arranged for the restoration and re-pewing of the nave and aisles in 1846, and rebuilt the chancel.<sup>84</sup>

In 1851 the church was said to contain 155 free sittings and 31 appropriated sittings. Two services were held each Sunday, with average attendances of 40 in the morning and 60 in the afternoon.<sup>85</sup> The population began to decline from its peak of 185 in 1851, to 164 in 1871.<sup>86</sup> The pattern of services remained similar, but the average congregation in 1875 was only 15 in the morning and 40 in the afternoon, with no more than 11 communicants even at festivals. The rector, the Rev. Arthur Rendell, commented to his bishop that he found that 'small farmers and farm labourers are a difficult class to deal with'.<sup>87</sup> The agricultural depression began to impact on the village, and many moved away, presumably for employment. The population fell further, to 91 in 1901 and 78 in 1911,<sup>88</sup> but the rector in 1906, the Rev. John Denny Gedge, was having some success at holding the level of church attendance. He recorded that 'My people, with the exception of labourer's families, are all small graziers and cannot leave their abode,' working from dawn until 'bedtime', but although the morning congregation was 'very small', average attendance was about 40 for his Sunday evening services, with 21 communicants on Easter Day.<sup>89</sup>

In 1967 the rector recorded that although the population of the village was only 30 people, there were regular attendances of 20 at services (presumably including some from Garthorpe) and 70 people had been present at the previous harvest festival.<sup>90</sup> As the number of farming families continued to reduce in the late 20th and early 21st centuries, Christmas became the best-attended service.<sup>91</sup>

## Music, memorials and bells

There was 'no organ' in 1832,<sup>92</sup> but an 'unsightly gallery' that was removed when the church was restored in 1846 may have been used by singers and an instrumental band. Oak desks were added to the chancel that year, for a choir.<sup>93</sup> The Rev. Robert Molesworth, rector from 1865 to 1871, gave a harmonium to the church.<sup>94</sup> Another organ was purchased by the church in 1898 following fund-raising efforts.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> LPL, ICBS 3835.

<sup>83</sup> LPL, ICBS 3835.

<sup>84</sup> Below, restoration of the church.

<sup>85</sup> TNA, HO 129/418/89. Although pews in the south-west corner of the church have now been removed, it is still difficult to envisage how 186 people could have been accommodated in this building.

<sup>86</sup> *VCH Leics.* III, 186.

<sup>87</sup> Northants RO, ML 597.

<sup>88</sup> *VCH Leics.* III, 186.

<sup>89</sup> Northants RO, Box X 924.

<sup>90</sup> *Grantham Jnl.*, 24 Feb. 1967.

<sup>91</sup> Ex inf. John Cunnington, church warden 2021.

<sup>92</sup> ROLLR, 245'50/5, p. 50.

<sup>93</sup> *Leic. Chron.*, 21 Nov. 1846.

<sup>94</sup> *Grantham Jnl.*, 25 Mar. 1871.

<sup>95</sup> ROLLR, DE 1206/24.



There are no major memorials, but two of note are the large stone with a painted coat of arms fixed to the south wall near the door, and a large bronze wall plaque in the chancel. The former is a memorial to James Phelp, the lord of Coston manor, who died in 1814 aged 60. The filled holes around three sides suggest that this was originally laid horizontally next to a wall, with railings around three sides. This is probably the ‘tomb’ next to the south door which can be seen on a sketch plan of 1846, with the stone probably hung on the wall when the church was restored that year, to create more room for seats. The bronze panel in the chancel is in memory of Temple Crozier, the son of the then rector, who became an actor and died in a tragic accident on a London stage in 1896, aged 24.<sup>96</sup> The memorial was provided by members of his profession.

There were three bells in the tower in 1552, ‘of a corde [chord].’<sup>97</sup> These do not survive. A new bell was cast in 1638, bearing the inscription ‘God save the Church’.<sup>98</sup> This was perhaps a reference to the contemporary disagreement between the archbishop of Canterbury (William Laud) and the diocesan bishop (John Williams) over matters including the placement of the altar in the chancel, which resulted in the bishop’s suspension from office and imprisonment in the Tower of London from 1638 to 1640.<sup>99</sup> Another bell, by George Oldfield of Nottingham, was cast in 1671 and inscribed ‘God save the King’.<sup>100</sup> A new tenor bell was cast by Taylors of Loughborough in 1888, a gift to the church by Coston’s rector, the Revd Arthur Rendell in memory of his wife, Helen Bliss Rendell, who died in 1887 aged 36.<sup>101</sup> When the tower was restored in 1936 the church architects advised the then rector that the tower was not strong enough to withstand the stresses from ringing the three bells.<sup>102</sup> Two of them were taken down, and were sold to Taylors of Loughborough in 1987.<sup>103</sup> The bell cast in 1671 was the only bell in the tower in 2021.<sup>104</sup>

<sup>96</sup> R. Mander and J. Mitchenson, *Lost Theatres of London* (1976), 99–100; *Grantham Jnl*, 15 Aug 1896; *The Era*, 15 Aug. 1896.

<sup>97</sup> TNA, E 117/11/43/23.

<sup>98</sup> T. North, *The Church Bells of Leicestershire* (Leicester, 1876), 165.

<sup>99</sup> *ODNB*, sv, ‘Williams, John (1582–1650), Archbishop of York’ (accessed 6 Nov. 2021).

<sup>100</sup> T. North, *The Church Bells of Leicestershire* (Leicester, 1876), 165.

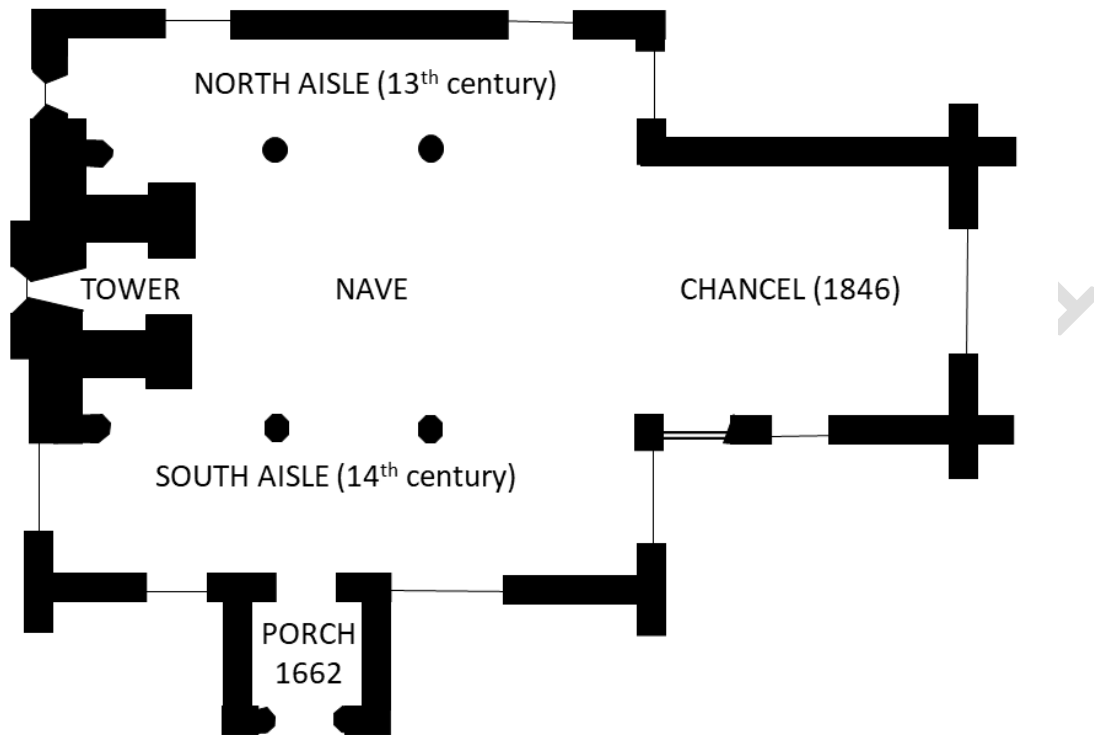
<sup>101</sup> ROLLR, DE 1206/11; Northants. RO, ML 1120, pp. 291–2; *Grantham Jnl*, 8 Sept. 1888; memorial plaque in church.

<sup>102</sup> ROLLR, DE 1206/15/7.

<sup>103</sup> Ex inf. C. Pickford, Archivist, Taylors of Loughborough.

<sup>104</sup> Loughborough Bellfoundry, notes by E. Morris; G. Dawson, ‘Church bells of Leicestershire’ (unpub. MS).

## Architectural Description



Plan of Coston church

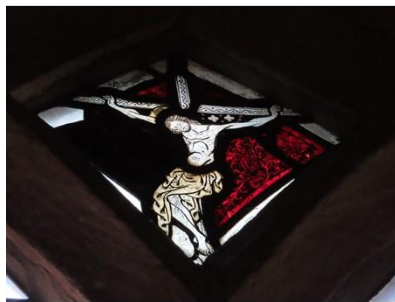
The oldest part of the building is the west wall of the nave, with its round-headed, deeply splayed window suggesting a date contemporaneous with the first documentary record of the church, c.1080. This early church, built from local ironstone with limestone dressings, may have had a bellcote, with the limestone tower added inside the nave at a later date (see image at start of 'Introduction' section).<sup>105</sup>

A north aisle was added in the 13th century, with its west wall (facing the road) built of limestone ashlar. The north wall is a mixture of ironstone and limestone. The single-lancet window at the west end is also splayed, but with a pointed head, and was heavily restored in the 19th century. The north arcade of three bays comprises Romanesque arches on piers which are circular in cross-section, with deeply incised bases and octagonal capitals. The aisle roof is supported by four carved corbels on the north, including one in the form of an exhibitionist monkey, two with carved angels (one holding a shield that would almost certainly have been painted with the arms of a donor) and one with 'stiff leaf' foliage. Some of the medieval carved roof timbers survive.

The south aisle, of ironstone with limestone dressings, is generally held to have been added in the 14th century, although evidence (visible outside the church) of a single lancet window near the

<sup>105</sup> This section of the history is drawn from NHLE, no. 1061273, Church of St Andrew, Main Street, <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1061273> (accessed 6 Aug 2019); Pevsner, Leics. and Rutl. (1984), 140–1; Arts Society, Leicestershire Church Recording Team, 'A Record of the Parish Church of St Andrew, Coston, Leicestershire' (Unpubl, 2019) and the personal observation of the author.

porch may suggest a slightly earlier date. The arcade is of pointed arches on octagonal piers, with carved heads on the nave side of the two westernmost arches. The aisle walls are decorated internally and externally with a vine frieze, and the east window includes two surviving pieces of 14th-century glass, depicting the crucifixion and the Virgin Mary. The east end of the north wall of this aisle contains a triple sedilia and piscina, 14th-century in style, although the piscina (in one piece with the sedilia) is under a Romanesque arch. Immediately to their west is a low Gothic arch set into the wall, perhaps originally over a medieval tomb. This aisle may have functioned as a chantry chapel, and perhaps also as a Lady Chapel. Externally, the aisle has a limestone parapet and two gargoyles to throw rainwater away from the building. The buttresses at each end of the aisle are topped by stumpy pinnacles, each with four niches. The eastern buttress contains a mass dial. There are carved heads at the ends of the mouldings around the windows, and a carved ledge, perhaps for a small statue, immediately above the south door, now within a porch. A stoup survives by the door.

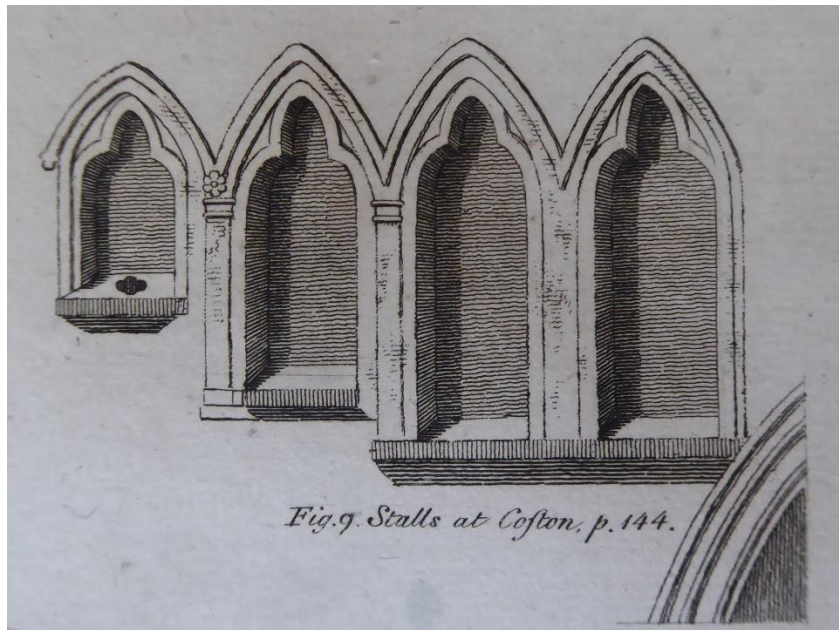


The 14th-century glass in the east window of the south aisle



An engraving of the triple sedilia and piscina that were in the medieval chancel (since demolished) show that these were also of the 14th century.<sup>106</sup> There are sufficient differences to make it unlikely that these were moved to the south aisle when the chancel was demolished.

<sup>106</sup> J. Nichols, *History*, facing p. 140.



The sedilia and piscina that were in the medieval chancel

A clerestory was added above the nave in the 15th century, with its windows centred over the arches beneath. There are three corbels on each side, with the centre corbel on the north side, depicting a man playing two pipes, still bearing traces of paint. The present font is also from the 15th century, and bears evidence of the locking points for the medieval cover.

The porch was built or rebuilt in 1662.<sup>107</sup> Rain was entering the church and chancel in 1796, and also coming through the belfry windows.<sup>108</sup> Part of the roof of the north aisle had been repaired and the east end lately rebuilt in 1832. The porch, which bulged outwards and looked as if it would fall,<sup>109</sup> was taken down and completely rebuilt by 1836.<sup>110</sup>

## Restoration

The north-west corner of the body of the church was also said to be falling down in 1836.<sup>111</sup> The restoration of the church by Sheffield architects Weightman and Hadfield in 1846 included a complete rebuilding of the chancel,<sup>112</sup> which presents one of the earliest examples of Gothic Revival architecture in Leicestershire.<sup>113</sup> Principally known for their commissions to build Roman Catholic churches,<sup>114</sup> the architects included within the new chancel a piscina and double sedilia featuring two female heads as mask stops, wearing headdresses stylistically of the 13th century, encaustic floor and wall tiles, choir stalls, a sanctuary elevated by three steps and a priest's door. The stained-glass artist William Warrington, whose early work had been under the direction of A.W.N. Pugin,

<sup>107</sup> Inscribed plaque, IR WL CW 1662, extant but inscription badly worn in 2021.

<sup>108</sup> ROLLR, 1D 41/18/22, p. 253.

<sup>109</sup> ROLLR, 245'50/5, p. 49.

<sup>110</sup> ROLLR, 245'50/7, p. 65.

<sup>111</sup> ROLLR, 245'50/7, p. 65.

<sup>112</sup> *Leic. Chronicle*, 21 Nov. 1846; *Lincs. Chronicle*, 20 Nov. 1846.

<sup>113</sup> G.K. Brandwood, 'Church building and restoration in Leicestershire, 1800-1914' (PhD, Leicester, 1984), I, 87, 95.

<sup>114</sup> ODNB, s.v., 'Hadfield, Matthew Ellison (1812–1885), architect, accessed 2 June. 2020.

produced the centre and upper panels of glass for the east window.<sup>115</sup> The centre of the three lights depicts the crucifixion of St Andrew, the patron saint.

Within the body of the church, the plaster was stripped from the walls, the font was moved to a position by the south entrance, a door in the north aisle was walled up, the floor was reboarded and paved with black and red tiles, a new pulpit and lectern were provided, new and additional seats fitted and a gallery taken down. A stone cross was added to the gable at the east end of the nave, matching one on the east end of the new chancel.<sup>116</sup> The floor of the church was probably raised and made level at this time, with the new south aisle floor c.10 inches above its medieval level. The rector, John Sandilands, paid for the new chancel, and the other work cost £275. Donations had raised £165, and Sandilands approach the Incorporated Church Building Society for a grant towards the new seating, but withdrew his application when the committee raised questions about the size of the population and lack of specific seats for children, the rector wondering whether ‘perhaps my case does not come under the class of places which the committee are in the habit of assisting’.<sup>117</sup> A grant of £30 was provided by the Church Building Society of the County and Town of Leicester.<sup>118</sup> A further £170 had been raised by 1860.<sup>119</sup> By 1865, plans had been drawn up for the restoration of the north aisle.<sup>120</sup> ‘Extensive reparations’ were completed in the church in 1870,<sup>121</sup> probably mostly or entirely the restoration of this aisle, which was described as ‘recently restored’ in 1872,<sup>122</sup> and was said to have been the only work carried out between 1865 and 1877.<sup>123</sup>

A new wooden altar and reredos were provided by James Walter Sandilands, 12th baron Torpichen and the eldest son of the Hon. and Rev. James Sandilands. These were dedicated in 1888 in honour of his late parents and late brother Commander Francis Robert Sandilands, who had died the previous year.<sup>124</sup>

Further restoration was required in 1934, due to the combined effects of water ingress, death watch beetle in the roof timbers, masonry bees, especially affecting the south aisle, and the ‘perished’ lead on the nave roof. The estimated cost was £1,000, of which £500 was available from the sale of Coston rectory.<sup>125</sup> Lord Dysart provided £350. The church was open for most of the time the building work was underway, with just a screen between the south aisle and the rest of the church. It had fully opened by the end of that year.<sup>126</sup>

A further £1,250 was required in the 1950s, for new lead for the nave roof, repairing and repointing the walls and re-leading the windows, and a grant of £300 was obtained but the balance was difficult to raise by a community ‘with 16 houses’.<sup>127</sup> The church still had no electricity, and was lit with oil

<sup>115</sup> *Lincs. Chronicle*, 20 Nov. 1846; ODNB, s.v., ‘Warrington, William (1796–1869), stained-glass artist’, accessed 2 June 2020.

<sup>116</sup> *Leic. Chronicle*, 21 Nov. 1846; *Lincs. Chronicle*, 20 Nov. 1846; *Coventry Standard*, 25 Dec. 1846; LPL, ICBS 3835.

<sup>117</sup> LPL, ICBS 3835; ICBS MB 12, p. 324.

<sup>118</sup> *Leic. Jnl.*, 26 June 1846.

<sup>119</sup> ROLLR, DE 1206/24.

<sup>120</sup> AAAS (1865–6), lxi–lxii.

<sup>121</sup> *Leic. Jnl.*, 7 Oct. 1870.

<sup>122</sup> Northants RO, ML 594.

<sup>123</sup> *Grantham Jnl.*, 25 Mar. 1865; 2 June 1877; 9 June 1877.

<sup>124</sup> *Grantham Jnl.*, 8 Sept. 1888.

<sup>125</sup> *Grantham Jnl.*, 18 Aug. 1934.

<sup>126</sup> *Grantham Jnl.*, 18 Aug. 1934; 22 Dec. 1934.

<sup>127</sup> *Grantham Jnl.*, 13 Aug. 1954; 11 Jan. 1957.



lamps.<sup>128</sup> After considerable efforts by the local community, the repairs were effected. The future of this Grade I listed building was again threatened in 2017 following the theft of lead from the roof, but a number of grants, most notably from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, enabled a new permanent roof covering to be installed and the east window and royal arms of 1780 to be restored.

## Religious Dissent

Two 'Papists' were noted in 1676,<sup>129</sup> and in 1706 one of the residents was described as a 'Roman Catholic, an antient poor woman'.<sup>130</sup> A solitary Catholic remained in 1712, but no other dissenters.<sup>131</sup>

There were four nonconformists in 1872, among a village of 140 people, but no dissenting place of worship.<sup>132</sup> Two families of Wesleyan and two of Calvinists were noted in 1875.<sup>133</sup> In the late 1870s the Leicestershire and Rutland Congregational Union had organised its rural work into 'circuits', with Wymondham the centre for evangelistic work in several local villages. This included house to house visitations 'according to opportunity at Garthorpe and Coston'.<sup>134</sup> Five dissenters (or perhaps households of dissenters) were recorded in 1882, two Wesleyans and three 'so-called Calvinists'.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> *Grantham Jnl.*, 13 Aug. 1954.

<sup>129</sup> Whiteman (ed.), *The Compton Census of 1676: a Critical Edition* (Oxford, 1986), 339.

<sup>130</sup> J. Broad (ed.), *Bishop Wake's Summary of Visitation Returns from the Diocese of Lincoln 1706–1715* (Oxford, 2012), II, 758.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>132</sup> Northants RO, ML 594.

<sup>133</sup> Northants RO, ML 597.

<sup>134</sup> G.T. Rimmington, 'Congregationalism in rural Leicestershire and Rutland 1863–1914', *Midland History*, 31 (2006), 97.

<sup>135</sup> Northants RO, ML 601.