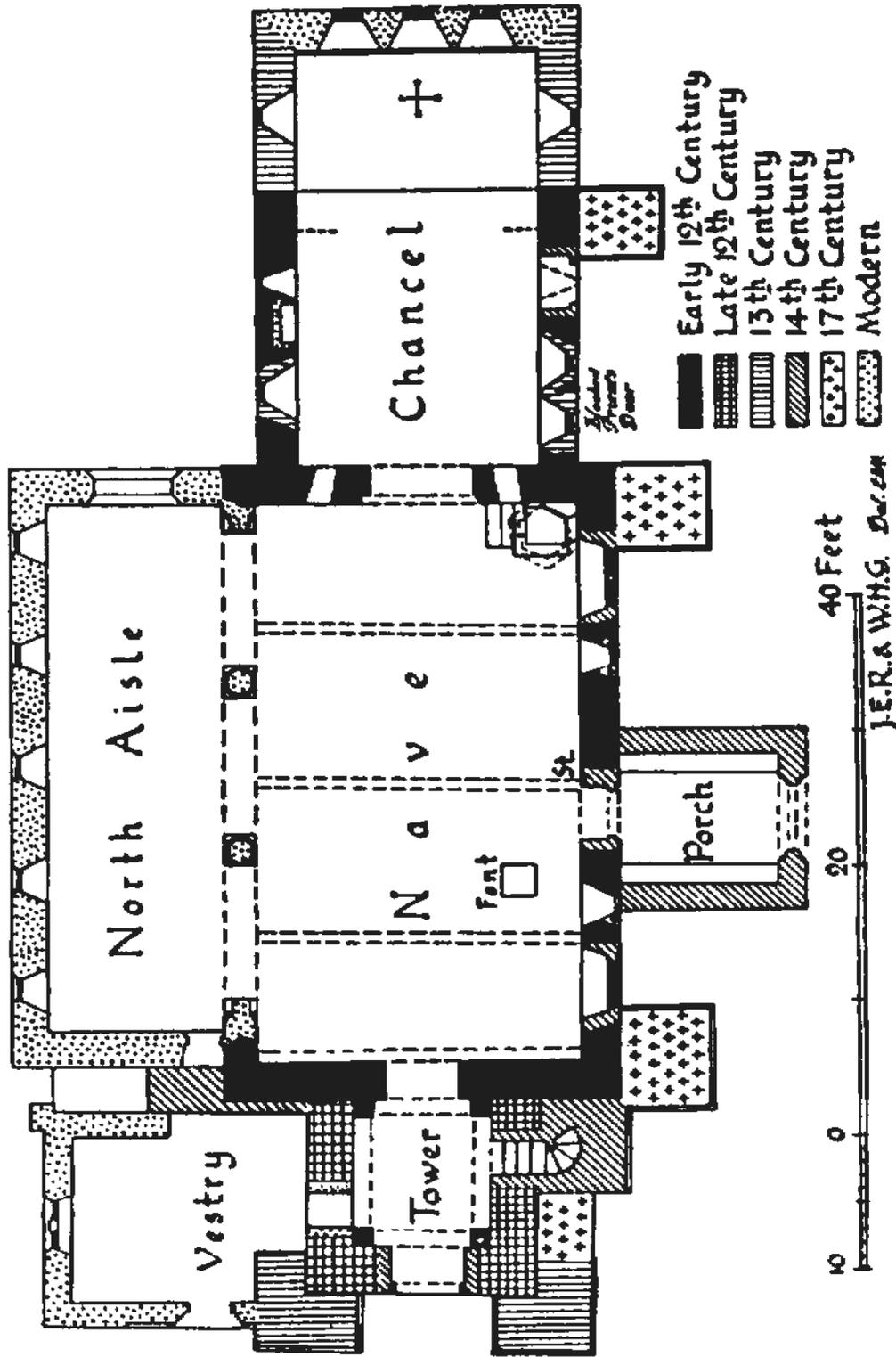


# Westfield Church



## *A Historical Guide to St John the Baptist Church*



Although Westfield is mentioned in the Domesday Book, there is no reference to a church. The present building was built in the early 12th century, around 1120, consisting of a nave and short chancel. The tower appears to have been built soon afterwards. When the rectory was granted to Battle Abbey in 1251, the chancel was extended 4.1 metres eastwards, probably to accommodate the brothers who resided in what is now Church Place Farm. Considerable alterations were made in the 14th century, and again in the 17th century. In 1861 the north wall of the nave was demolished and the north aisle built, along with a vestry. Shortly afterwards the Jacobean pews were replaced with the existing pine pews.

Start from the South door and walk round clockwise

The font dates from the 14th century, with a 17th century cover.

The door to the tower was the original entrance to the church before the tower was built. It was blocked off at some stage and a new door was re-opened in 1904. Over the door is the list of vicars, above which is a modern Royal Arms. Above again, is a closed window which once gave view from the bell ringers chamber.

Within the tower (unfortunately closed to visitors), massive timbers were erected to support the bell frame in the medieval period. There are three bells dated 1350, 1698 and 1699, but only the oldest is now in use. A small door leads to a spiral stair within a buttress, which was discovered in 1904.

The north aisle was built as an extension in 1861. The brass lectern came from Westfield Place in 1936. It was stolen from the church in 1984 and later found abandoned in a wood.

The lovely Norman arch into the chancel has a squint (or hagioscope) on each side. These were inserted to enable the priest to be seen from the nave when the chancel was extended in 1251.

In the chancel, the early 20th century bracket organ was rebuilt in 1958. The small window next to it, with that opposite, may be the only surviving windows from the original Norman building.

The east wall of the chancel was demolished to a height of 2 metres and re-built in the 19th century. The carved wooden reredos was installed in 1935. The figures represent the Archangels Gabriel and Michael flanking Christ the King. The medallion above is a copy of the Brienz carving of the "face of the suffering Christ". Behind the central panel there is a small Norman arched space which may have been a reliquary. The choir stalls date from the same period as the reredos. On the south side of the chancel near the arch there are traces of the original priest's door.

The pulpit is made from panels of the old Jacobean pews, and the sounding board was restored in 1994. The millennium window, to the right of the pulpit, was installed in 2000, and depicts symbolically the relationship between Christ (on the right) and St John the Baptist (on the left). This window and that at the west end of the south wall, are 14th century, and the two rounded ones in between may be Norman windows enlarged in the 17th century.



To the left of the south door is part of an old holy water stoop of Cotswold stone. The beautiful old door bears the date 1542.

Outside, and above the porch door, is a sundial dated 1626, but it was placed here in modern times.

The west doorway and the porch both date from the 14th century. The tower has a Sussex Cap and two louvred lights in the north, south and west walls.

The lychgate is worth inspecting with its carved angels bearing shields. This is a memorial to a child of the village and was built in 1887.



Before you leave please spend some time quietly remembering that this place has been used for the worship of God for nine centuries. Pray for yourself, those you love, and for all who worship here.

As you leave the church you may like to visit the garden of remembrance which in the west corner of the churchyard. This place of peace and tranquillity provides an opportunity to contemplate the mystery of God who made us from dust yet calls us to eternal life.