

## = St Denys ' Church , Sleaford =

St Denys ' Church , Sleaford , is a medieval parish church in Sleaford , Lincolnshire , England . While a church and a priest are likely to have been present in the settlement since approximately 1086 , the oldest parts of the present building are the tower and spire . The tower and spire can be dated to the late 12th and early 13th centuries ; the stone broach spire is one of the earliest examples of its kind in England . The Decorated Gothic nave , aisles and north transept were built in the 14th century . The church was altered in the 19th century : the north aisle was rebuilt by the local builders Kirk and Parry in 1853 and the tower and spire were largely rebuilt in 1884 after being struck by lightning . St Denys ' remains in use for worship by the Church of England .

The church is a Grade I listed building , a national designation given to " buildings of exceptional interest " . The architectural historian Sir Nikolaus Pevsner stated it is " remembered for the flowing tracery of its windows " . Built out of Ancaster stone with a lead roof , St Denys ' is furnished with a medieval rood screen and a communion rail , possibly by Sir Christopher Wren , and has a peal of eight bells , dating to 1796 . The church also houses several memorials , including two altar tombs commemorating members of the Carre family , Sleaford 's Lords of the Manor in the 17th century .

## = = Description = =

St Denys ' Church is the parish church of the benefice of Sleaford ( formerly called New Sleaford ) , which encompasses most of the market town of Sleaford in the English non @-@ metropolitan county of Lincolnshire . The benefice is a vicarage and falls within the deanery of Lafford and the archdeaconry and diocese of Lincoln ; as of 2015 , the vicar is Rev. Philip Anthony Johnson , who was appointed in 2013 . The church is located next to ( and faces onto ) the market place at the town centre . It is dedicated to St Denys ; the Victorian clergyman and local historian Edward Trollope stated that this is a medieval form of St Dionysius , but does not elaborate on which of the several saints called Dionysius this refers to . According to a pamphlet published by the parochial church council , St Denys is a medieval composite of Dionysius of Paris , Dionysius the Areopagite and Pseudo @-@ Dionysius the Areopagite .

As of 2015 , regular church services are scheduled for Sundays and Wednesdays . Holy Communion is conducted weekly at 8 : 00am on Sundays , followed by Sunday School and an all @-@ age family worship at 10 : 00am . A parent and toddler group is scheduled for Wednesdays at 9 : 30am .

## = = History = =

## = = = Background and origins = = =

The Sleaford area has been inhabited since the late Iron Age ; people settled around the ford where a prehistoric track running northwards from Bourne crossed the River Sleas . A large hoard of coin moulds belonging to the Corieltauvi tribe have been uncovered in this area and dated to the late Iron Age . It was occupied by the Romans , and then by the Anglo @-@ Saxons . The place @-@ name Sleaford first appears in 852 , meaning " crossing over a muddy stream " , in reference to the Sleas . The settlement around the crossing came to be known as " Old " Sleaford in 13th @-@ century sources to distinguish it from developments further west , around the present @-@ day market place , which came to be known as " New " Sleaford . The origins of New Sleaford are not clear , leading to a theory that it was planted by the Bishop of Lincoln in the 12th century as a means of increasing his income , hence the epithet " New " . The town 's compass @-@ point layout , the 12th @-@ century date of St Denys ' stonework and other topographical features offer evidence for this theory .

A speculative reassessment of Domesday Book ( 1086 ) material suggests that St Denys ' origins may be earlier . Two manors called Eslaforde ( Sleaford ) were recorded in the Domesday Book ,

one held by Remigius , Bishop of Lincoln , the other by Ramsey Abbey . The Bishop succeeded a Saxon thegn , Bardi , and held 11 carucates with 29 villeins , 11 bordars , 6 sokemen , a church and priest , as well as 8 mills , 1 acre of woodland , 320 acres ( 130 ha ) of meadow and 330 acres ( 130 ha ) of marsh . Ramsey Abbey had been granted land in Sleaford and surrounding villages before the Norman Conquest of England ; in Domesday its fee consisted of 1 carucate , 1 sokeman , 2 villeins and 27 acres of meadow . It was sokeland of the abbot of Ramsey 's manor of Quarrington , where he held two churches . There is no evidence for a second church at Quarrington , which suggests that the record is alluding to one in another of the abbot 's manors for which Quarrington was an estate centre . The local historians David Roffe and Christine Mahany ruled out the possibility that this referred to Cranwell , another of the abbey 's fees , and concluded that it is probably a reference to the church at Old Sleaford , which was granted by a knight of Ramsey to Haverholme Priory in c . 1165 . Hence , the church possessed by the bishop in the other manor must have been a second church in Sleaford , and therefore could only have been St Denys ' in what would become New Sleaford .

= = = Expansion = = =

Sleaford and its church were altered considerably in the 12th century , especially under Bishop Alexander of Lincoln ; a castle was constructed to the west of the town during his episcopate and work on the earliest surviving parts of the church may date to this period . Facing onto the market place , the tower is the oldest part of the present church building and dates to the late 12th century , probably c . 1180 . Its broach spire has been dated to the early 13th century , possibly c . 1220 . A prebendary of Sleaford is recorded in the late 13th century whose office was probably founded by one of the post-Conquest Bishops , who were its patrons . The vicarage of Sleaford was founded and endowed in 1274 ; the record has survived and shows Henry de Sinderby being presented to the vicarage by the Treasurer of Lincoln and Prebendary of Sleaford , Richard de Belleau ; the Bishop instituted him that March . The vicar could profit from tithes and oblations , and was given a house formerly occupied by one Roger the chaplain , but he had to pay £ 15 to the prebendary at the feasts of the Nativity and St John the Baptist . The prebendary otherwise retained his jurisdiction over the parish .

A period of rebuilding and remodelling occurred in the late Middle Ages . A chantry chapel , dedicated to the Virgin Mary , was founded in 1271 by the merchants Thomas Blount and John de Bucham , who endowed it with lands around Old and New Sleaford , and several surrounding villages . The chapel is located on the north aisle , and the chaplain was instructed to pray there for the founders at his daily mass . The chantry priest 's house is recorded in the 1440s as one of the oldest buildings in Sleaford ; located in the churchyard , it became the Vicarage . The tower was probably accompanied by a nave of a similar date , which was rebuilt in the Decorated Gothic style in the mid to late 14th century ; the transept followed twenty or thirty years later , according to Trollope . A clerestory was added in around 1430 and the chancel was remodelled at this time .

= = = Early modern and later = = =

A diocesan return of 1563 recorded 145 households in the parish of New Sleaford , while the Compton Census ( 1676 ) reveals that New Sleaford had a Conformist population of 576 people , no " Papists " , and 6 Non-Conformists . There is a widely held local tradition that St Denys ' was used during the English Civil War ( 1642 ? 51 ) as a barracks for parliamentary troops who destroyed the interior furnishings . The local historian Trollope stated that the soldiers looted the brass eagle lectern ( last recorded in 1622 ) , broke the stained glass windows and the organ , and stole valuables . Whether this damage occurred or not , repairs to the windows and roof were carried out in 1657 , paid for by public subscription . Galleries were also added to the church in the 18th century : the south in 1758 , west in 1772 , and north in 1783 ? 84 . In 1772 , Edward Evans , a ship 's surgeon on HMS Egmont , donated £ 300 to replace the organ with one built by Samuel Green of London .

For most of the 19th century , the Anglican community dominated Sleaford 's civic bodies , including the Board of Guardians , who oversaw the workhouse , and the Local Board of Health . Dr Richard Yerburch and his son , Richard , were vicars in 1809 ? 51 and 1851 ? 82 respectively and had family connections with the local builders Kirk and Parry ; Yerburch and Thomas Parry ( one half of the firm ) were on the Board of Guardians and were labelled members of a " family party " by opponents during the Board 's 1870 elections ( they were nonetheless re @-@ elected ) . They and other local clergymen were key players in the establishment of National schools in Sleaford and Quarrington , which Kirk and Parry built . The Anglican congregation , at an estimated 700 to 800 people in 1851 ( St Denys ' had enough space for 743 people ) , was less than half of the size of the nonconformist community , which was probably larger than 2 @,@ 000 and tended to flourish in poorer parts of the town .

The 19th century also witnessed two major restorations to St Denys ' . As the congregation expanded , the need for greater space was met with the addition of a new north aisle in 1853 . This coincided with a wider restoration project carried out at the cost of £ 3 @,@ 500 by Kirk and Parry , which included the demolition of the galleries , the addition of a strainer arch and the relocation of the organ . The church was damaged by an electrical storm in 1884 and parts , including the stone broach spire ? one of the oldest in England ? were rebuilt by Kirk and Parry in 1885 ? 86 . The old organ was sold in 1891 and St Hugh 's Chapel and the choir vestry were dedicated to the memory of a local solicitor , Henry Snow , in 1906 . Electric lighting was introduced in 1951 ? 53 and extensive restoration work was carried out in 1966 , when the organ was rebuilt , and in 1988 . Fifty @-@ four solar panels were added in 2008 , at the cost of £ 70 @,@ 000 , and by 2011 were able to cover the church 's electricity bill .

= = Architecture , fittings and grounds = =

St Denys ' is constructed in Ancaster stone across four periods : the earliest sections in a transitional style between Early English Gothic and Decorated Gothic ; the late medieval nave , aisles and chancel in Decorated Gothic ; the later Perpendicular Gothic clerestory and chancel ; and the Victorian neo @-@ Gothic restorations . The earliest parts consist of the late 12th or early 13th @-@ century tower and spire on the west side of the church , which have a combined height of 144 feet ( 44 m ) . Its arched entrance exhibits features of both the Early English and Decorated Gothic styles . During the restoration , a 15th @-@ century window was removed , placed in the churchyard and replaced by arcading and three circlets , deemed " somewhat absurd " by the architectural historian Sir Nikolaus Pevsner .

With the exception of the tower and spire , much of the church was rebuilt in the Decorated Gothic style during the late 14th century . The nave and aisles extend eastwards from the tower . Outside , parts of the aisles are highly decorated ; the north doorway includes shafts , mouldings and finials , while the simpler south doorway has niches and monster carvings . The northern doorway has a gable which encroaches up into a five @-@ light window . Pevsner remarks that St Denys ' is particularly notable for its tracery , and the building 's entry on the Statutory List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest notes " particularly good mid [ 14th @-@ century ] tracery and ornament " . The window above the north doorway is a good example ; it contains elements shared by others of the Decorated style around the church , including reticulated ogee arches of varying complexity . A Perpendicular clerestory adorns the aisles with three @-@ light windows ; it dates to the early 15th century , possibly c . 1430 . The north aisle was extended in 1853 , but the architects , Kirk and Parry , reused the windows . The north transept includes a six @-@ light window ? " one of the great flowing designs of the country " , according to Pevsner . Simon Jenkins , in his 2012 England 's Thousand Best Churches , awards St Denys three stars and says of the window tracery : " This is Lincolnshire at its most curvaceous , best displayed in the north transept north window . Words can barely do justice to this work ... This is a work of infinite complexity , with variations repeated throughout the church . "

The tower ceiling has a tierceron vault and is connected to the nave and aisles by arches . The nave 's arcading spans four bays , the last of which on the north side acts as an entrance to the

transept . The north aisle was extended in 1853 by Kirk and Parry , who added a strainer arch to support the tower and join it with the north aisle . The reredos and altar were built in 1922 by L.T. Moore ; the rood screen was restored by Ninian Comper in 1918 and the Communion rail was taken from Lincoln Cathedral during a restoration ; it has been attributed to Sir Christopher Wren , but Pevsner makes no mention of this . The rood loft is also by Comper , who is described by Simon Jenkins as " inventive as ever . His wood is unusually dark and unpainted , as are the rood figures and angels . The loft blooms out over the crossing . " The screen and altar rails in St Hugh 's Chapel are the work of C.H. Fowler ; E. Stanley Watkins completed the reredos in 1906 . In the 1640s , the stained glass included the armorial bearings of Sir William Hussey impaling his wife 's Barkley arms , and the arms of Markham and John Russell , Bishop of Lincoln . These have not survived , but the current stained glass includes a " very Gothic " window by Hardman dating to c . 1853 , three by Holland of Warwick from the late 1880s , one of Ward and Hughes ( 1885 ) and one by Morris & Co. from 1900 . In 2006 Glenn Carter completed a stained glass window dedicated to Yvonne Double which had been commissioned by her widower , Eddy Double .

The earliest peal recorded at St Denys ' had six bells : three dating from 1600 , one from 1707 and two undated . In 1796 a new peal of eight bells were cast by Thomas Osborn of Downham , Norfolk ; the tenor is in the E key and weighs 19 long cwt 3 qr 6 lb ( 2 @, @ 218 lb or 1 @, @ 006 kg ) . Samuel Green 's organ of 1772 was rebuilt by Holdich in 1852 and replaced by the present organ in 1891 , which was built by Forster and Andrews of Hull ; rebuilt by Harrison & Harrison in 1966 , it was restored by A. Carter in 1999 and has three manuals and a pedalboard . St Hugh 's Chapel has its own organ , with one manual , installed by Cousans and Sons in 1912 . The church also houses a collection of fifteen antique , chained books in an oak reading desk ; the oldest items date to the early 17th century and include tracts on divinity . Other items of furniture include two old chests and a dole cupboard , while a 16th @-@ century tapestry is in the church 's possession . The octagonal font is in a Decorated Gothic style , but has been altered considerably .

The churchyard around St Denys ' has been expanded several times : first in 1391 , when the Bishop of Lincoln , John Bokingham , was granted a piece of land 150 by 8 feet ( 45 @. @ 7 m x 2 @. @ 4 m ) to one side of the church . Land to the north was also added in 1796 . The grounds were enclosed by a dwarf wall , which was replaced by a more substantial stone wall and iron fence in 1837 ; the railings were removed during the First World War . In a report on the town 's health in 1850 , William Ranger criticised the overcrowding of the churchyard ; in 1855 , burials in the grounds ceased and the vestry elected a burial board to produce a solution . They purchased 2 acres , 3 roods and 31 poles ( 0 @. @ 92 ha ) of land to the north of Eastgate at a cost of £ 1 @, @ 500 ; this was converted into a cemetery and a further 2 roods and 17 poles ( 0 @. @ 063 ha ) were bought for an access road . These grounds were extended in 1862 by an acquisition of 3 acres and 39 poles ( 1 @. @ 51 ha ) of land to the west of the cemetery ; they are now managed by Sleaford Town Council .

= = Memorials = =

According to Edward Trollope , the oldest tombstone in the church was from the 13th century ; it was faded and illegible when he recorded it in or before 1872 . A 14th @-@ century slab , originally for a now @-@ lost effigy , is in the church , and brass plate from the same period was discovered during the 1853 restoration . Richard Dokke , along with his wife Joanna and son John , are commemorated in a plaque dating to the 1430s , and a plaque to William Harebeter and his wife Elizabeth also dates to the 15th century .

Although Gervase Holles recorded many 16th @-@ century monuments when he visited Sleaford , most have disappeared . Amongst those which remain are the tombs and plaques commemorating the first members of the Carre family to settle in Sleaford . The Carres hailed from Northumberland , but George Carre ( d . 1521 ) , a wool merchant , established himself in the town and is commemorated in St Denys ' by a brass . On the northern side of the chancel is an alabaster monument dedicated to George 's eldest surviving son Robert Carre ( d . 1590 ) , his three wives and some of their children ; he became lord of the manors of Old and New Sleaford . Opposite , on

the southern side , is an alabaster altar tomb by Maximilian Colt dedicated to Robert 's fourth son and eventual heir , Sir Edward Carre , 1st Baronet ( d . 1618 ) , which carries the effigies of Edward and one of his two wives , probably his second , Anne Dyer ; according to Trollope , it was " said to have been mutilated during the Civil War " . Further plaques commemorate Sir Edward Carre 's grandson , Sir Robert Carre , 3rd Baronet ( d . 1682 ) , and his son , Sir Edward ( d . 1683 ) , who is also commemorated by a bust in the church .

There are numerous other memorials to prominent Sleafordians . Early examples are plaques to John Walpoole ( d . 1591 , monument dated 1631 ) , the draper Richard Warsope ( d . 1609 , erected by Robert Camock ) , and Rev. Theophilus Brittain ( d . 1696 ) . Later monuments include those of Richard Moore ( d . 1771 ) and Elizabeth Cooper ( d . 1792 ) , as well as a slab for Eleanor ( d . 1725 ) , wife of John Peart . The novelist Frances Brooke ( d . 1789 ) is buried in the church . Clergymen include William Seller , Joseph Francis ( d . 1749 ) and Anthony Skepper ( d . 1773 ) . A window is dedicated to a local solicitor , Henry Snow ( d . 1905 ) , and memorials on the north wall include George Jeudwine ( d . 1952 ) , another solicitor , and the local historian William Hosford ( d . 1987 ) . The monument to Ann Bankes ( d . 1834 ) incorporates a statue of a woman sinking into the ground , which Pevsner called " remarkably tender " , while the tablet to Ann Moore ( d . 1830 ) in the transept is noted as " good Grecian " .