

# **‘Rediscovering our Parish Churches’**

## **English Heritage and the Diocese of Salisbury**

### **Partnership Project**

#### **Part One: Historical, Architectural and Archaeological Review**

#### **Stourton, St Peter**

- 1.1 *Deanery:* Heytesbury      1.2 *Civil parish:* Stourton with Gasper
- 1.3 *Church address:* High Street, Stourton with Gasper, Wilts BA12 6QF
- 1.4 *Grid reference:* ST7763733946
- 1.5 *Listing grade:* Grade I      1.6 *Scheduled ancient monument:* N/A  
(Listing description appended in section 7)
- 1.7 *Is the church in a conservation area?* Yes.
- 1.8 *Does the church stand in a churchyard?* Yes.
- 1.9 *Date of visit:* 6 October 2008      1.10 *Report by:* Martin Cherry
- 1.11 *Contact made on site:* Crin Fearon
- 1.12 *Sources consulted:* Incorporated Church Building Society, Lambeth Palace Library, file 14524 (1970s repairs). Wiltshire & Swindon Archives, 497/7 (1847 restoration) and /14 (east end works); Nikolaus Pevsner and Bridget Cherry, *The Buildings of England: Wiltshire* (Harmondsworth, 1975), p. 494. *Kelly’s Directory of Wiltshire* (London, 1935), p. 225.

#### **2. A STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

Stourton church nestles on a hillside in a ravishing setting, looking over (and seen from) the magnificent grounds of Stourhead. It is famous for its monuments to the Hoare family, eminent bankers and landowners: Henry Hoare bought the Stourhead estate in 1717 and built the house in the most up-to-date neo-Palladian fashion: it is curious that neither he nor his son, another Henry, who laid out the grounds, did much to embellish, yet alone rebuild the church, although their monuments are substantial features within it. Much of their contribution in the 18th-century was swept away by the Victorian restorers. It was Sir Richard Colt Hoare (1758-1838), the antiquarian, author of the path breaking history of the county of Wiltshire, who adapted the church to fit more picturesquely into the landscape when seen from views within the grounds, by adding the ornamental parapets to the north side of the church.

*Fittings and furnishings* As mentioned above, it is the monuments that visitors come to Stourton church to see. However, it is the Victorian furniture

installed in the 1870s that provides much of the character of the interior. Especially good is the robustly designed wooden pulpit, sitting on clustered stone shafts, that connects with the low chancel wall screen: these features group particularly well with the contemporary choir stalls.

### **3. THE BUILDING: ITS HISTORICAL BACKGROUND, SETTING AND CONTENTS**

*Listing and Sites & Monuments descriptions appended?*

*Listing: Yes SAM: N/A*

#### **3.1 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

There is no evidence of a church at Stourton before the first documentary reference to it in 1291. The earliest physical evidence is also 13th century.

#### **3.2 THE CHURCH AND ITS PRINCIPAL FITTINGS AND FURNISHINGS**

3.2.1 *Building materials.* Dressed limestone, tiled chancel roof, lead nave roof.

3.2.2 *Name(s) of architect(s), builder(s), patron(s) where known.*

The powerful Stourton family were patrons by 1291 and remained so throughout the Middle Ages. Records of the bishop of Salisbury's visitation in 1553 indicate that the church was in a ruinous condition at that time. The patronage had passed to the Hoare family by the 18th century. The names of the architects and builders have not been recorded but it is likely that evidence will exist for work carried out in the 18th and 19th centuries in the Stourhead archives. The subsequent history is dealt with under 3.2.3.

3.2.3 *Plan form, principal construction phases and architectural features.*

West tower, nave with aisles, chancel with south organ chamber, north chapel and porch.

Of the 13th century church, parts of the tower and the north arcade remain and the old roof line of the nave is visible on the west wall. If the east window is a reliable copy of the original then it dates from the early 14th century and probably represents a rebuilding or extension of the chancel at that time. The church was transformed in the 15th century with the raising of the nave roof to provide clerestory windows that would have thrown light on the rood screen that was removed by Henry Hoare in the 18th century. Evidence for the fixings of this screen is visible in the masonry around the chancel arch. The chapel to the north of the chancel is also 15th-century and served as the chantry for the Stourton family: it still houses the magnificent tomb of Edward, Lord Stourton (who died in 1535). The church fell into disrepair in the 16th century and was substantially reordered in the 18th (a wall plaque recorded alterations carried out in 1723). The church was embellished in the early 19th century by the antiquarian, Sir Richard Colt Hoare, who added the pretty pierced parapets to make the church a more picturesque adornment to the stunning landscape gardens. The south aisle was added in 1847-8 at the expense of Sir Henry Hoare, the arcade copying the medieval arcade opposite (although the capitals of the latter were probably altered at this time, too).

The chancel was restored in 1876 when the famous Hoare family mural monuments were removed to the south aisle. The attractive painted roof of the chancel dates from this time. In 1937, the east end was radically changed when the east window was blocked (but it remains visible from outside) and the 19th fittings removed (see 3.2.4).

#### 3.2.4 *Principal furnishings, fittings and decorations.*

The principal internal features are the funerary monuments, which are of high quality and justly renowned.

1. The *monuments* are well known and need not be itemised in detail here. Pre-eminent among them are two Stourton family monuments in what was presumably the family chantry chapel (chancel, north): an effigy of a lady, c.1400 and the spectacular tomb chest of the 5th Lord Stourton (d.1536), essentially late medieval in feel but with some renaissance decorative elements; and in the south aisle but formerly in the chancel: Sir Henry Hoare, d.1785, who built Stourhead and whose wife wrote the epitaph and his son Henry, d. 1785, who first laid out the grounds sculpted by Charles Harris of The Strand, London (it cost £75); and Hester Colt Hoare (d.1785), which was made specially and shipped from Italy. These monuments have recently been restored and cleaned and look splendid. Other monuments are mentioned in the list description.

2. The *glass* includes fragments of good-quality figures, crown-like canopies and heraldry that contain the rich colours characteristic of the 14th century and may be c.1400. Two 19th-century windows are notable and may be from the same workshop. One (north aisle west) is signed by David Evans of Shrewsbury ('D.Evans Salop'), and dated 1859 (the other, also in the north aisle, commemorates Sir Richard Hoare who died in 1857). The windows have medallions (one contains figures, the other heraldry) set within brightly coloured strapwork and stencilling. Evans was famous for his pictorial glass and had a high reputation before the more medievalised windows favoured by the High Church Anglicans became fashionable in the 1840s and 1850s.

3. *Furnishings*. Decent Victorian fixed benches to the nave, possibly of 1876-7 (the movable benches to the north aisle were introduced in 1972); also an excellent pulpit (of wood, but standing on a limestone base that connects with the low chancel screen wall) which groups well with the choir stalls with arcaded frontals, those to the reading desks slightly more elaborate to reflect their greater liturgical importance. The robustly carved lectern might form part of this set. The latter ensemble is of 1876-7 but the reredos was removed in 1937. The nave and chancel are tiled throughout.

4. The *sanctuary* was transformed by Sir Henry Hoare and Alda his wife in 1937 to commemorate fifty years of happy marriage: the east window was blocked and a niche inserted containing a freestanding figure of Christ in stone; the tiling was removed, the stone masonry revealed and a large stone altar with figures was provided.

3.2.5 *Suggested corrections or additions to an existing listing description.*  
The list description is sufficiently full and accurate.

### **3.3 LISTED STATUS**

3.3.1 *Is it judged to be appropriate?* Yes. 3.3.2 *If not, suggestion.*

### **3.4 SETTING, CHURCHYARD, ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND GREENSPACE/WILDLIFE POTENTIAL**

3.4.1 *Setting.* A magnificent setting on a wooded slope above the gardens of Stourhead with attractive listed buildings close by. The churchyard contains a large number of important tomb chests and headstones including the memorial to the historian and owner of Stourhead, Sir Richard Colt Hoare – a classical sarcophagus under a Gothic canopy.

3.4.2 *Burials in the churchyard?* Yes. 3.4.3 *Still open for burials?* Yes.

3.4.4 *Archaeological significance/potential?* There have been burials here since medieval times and the churchyard is archaeologically sensitive.

3.4.5 *Green space/refuge for wildlife?* The churchyard is well tended and surrounded by woodland (owned by the National Trust), managed with nature conservation in mind. It is intended to carry out further planting north of the church. A management agreement is in preparation between the church, the Hoare family and the NT regarding both the churchyard and surrounding wooded areas, and the repair, maintenance and access to the church itself.

3.4.6 *War memorial?* No.

## **4. CURRENT USE AND FUTURE MANAGEMENT**

### **4.1 CONDITION**

4.1.1 *Is the church in poor/fair/good condition?* Generally good, but there are patches of damp and condensation. Sections of roof have moss and vegetation on them.

4.1.2 *Date of last Quinquennial Inspection Report.* December 2007.

4.1.3 *What significant works did it propose?* None, but it did urge more thorough maintenance, especially to control damp.

4.1.4 *Work carried out since last QIR?* Several tombs (both internal and external) have been restored in recent years.

4.1.5 *Work planned during the present quinquennium.* Action is in hand to repair the roof and the base of the walls.

4.1.6 *Summary of what works identified in the last QIR not carried out not carried out (and if possible explain why).* Damp spots still need attention.

## **4.2 AMENITIES, ACCESSIBILITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT**

4.2.1 *Does the congregation have access to all amenities that they require? Are these available in the church itself or in another nearby building? There is no demand for toilets or for more facilities (the church has running water and power).*

4.2.2 *If not, plans to introduce them? N/A Impact on the church fabric? N/A*

4.2.3 *Is the church accessible? Yes.*

4.2.4 *Has a disability audit been carried out? Yes.*

4.2.5 *Have any measures been taken to provide facilities for the disabled and are any planned? There is level access for wheelchair users (to chancel steps). It is intended to consider introducing a hearing loop system.*

4.2.6 *Environmental footprint. Has an audit been carried out? No. Measures implemented? A new boiler has been installed that will be more energy saving. Measures planned? Common sense measures such as gradual introduction of low-energy bulbs and economical use of lighting and heating.*

## **5. THE IMPACT OF CHANGE**

There are no proposals to reorder or change the church. The Victorian furnishings help determine the character of the interior. This is especially the case with the chancel (the sanctuary has been cleared) where the pulpit, chancel wall screen and choir stalls are dominant and very well handled features that draw the eye directly the visitor enters the building. There has been some re-ordering and there is scope for more careful rearrangement if the future viability of the church requires it.

## **6. CATEGORISATION OF ARCHITECTURAL AND HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE**

**2**

- **Category 1:** Churches of outstanding significance and limited adaptability for uses other than worship, with fabric and/or furnishings that should be protected from all but the most modest changes.
- **Category 2:** Churches of high significance that could nonetheless tolerate adaptive change if carefully and sympathetically managed.
- **Category 3:** Churches of significance, but with scope for more extensive alteration or adaptation in the interests of securing a sustainable future.
- **Category 4:** Churches of little architectural or historical significance. Many of these buildings serve their parishes very well and to describe them as being of little architectural or historic interest does not deny the contribution they might make in pastoral terms.

## **7. LISTING DESCRIPTIONS**

Anglican parish church. Early C14, C15, 1720s, early C19 and 1877 restoration, 1848 south aisle. Dressed limestone, tiled chancel roof, lead nave roof. Square flat-roofed north porch with Tudor-arched doorway and C20 double doors, plain parapet, aisle

has 4-light Perpendicular window to right and three 4-light to left of porch, parapet with pierced triangles, clerestory has four late C14 three-light windows, parapet with cusped lozenges. East end of aisle has 4-light Perpendicular window. Chancel east window blocked 1937, south window late C14, coped verge with cross finial. 1877 vestry/organ chamber has polygonal east end, C19 door and cusped lancets, early C19 family pew has 4-light window and coped verge with missing finial. 1848 south aisle has 4-light window, parapet as north aisle, clerestory with four 3-light Perpendicular windows, parapet. West window of south aisle is reset C15, north aisle has 4-light Perpendicular window. Three-stage tower with diagonal buttresses carried up to clasping buttresses, moulded plinth, blocked west doorway, C19 square-headed window over, pointed south doorway, middle stage has 1848 gilded clockface, bellstage has 2-light Perpendicular windows with pierced wooden louvres, battlemented parapet with gargoyles. Interior: Porch has C19 double chamfered Tudor-arched doorway with double doors, fragments of reset C15 mouldings in side walls. Nave has C19 four-bay ribbed ceiling on gilded angel corbels. Early C14 north arcade of 3 1/2 bays; cylindrical columns with double chamfered pointed arches, second from east is triple chamfered. C19 south arcade in same style as north. Continuously double chamfered tower arch with C19 screen, steps up to exterior south door, blocked west door with stoup retained on north side. Double chamfered chancel arch with evidence of former rood loft, including narrow chamfered doorway high up on south side, 1877 stone pulpit and dwarf wall across arch, C19 three-bay arch-braced collar roof with cusped windbracing, 1877 organ chamber to right through moulded archway with C19 ogee doorway and aumbry to left. 1937 altar and statue of Christ in niche in blocked east window. North chapel has large monument with canopied niches and Perpendicular blind tracery, recumbent effigies of Fifth Lord Stourton, died 1536, and his wife, C12 cylindrical stone font from Monkton Deverill, also various C17 and C18 floor tablets to members of Stourton family, north window has some late C15 stained glass. Other fittings: 1877 pews, Hoare family pew on south side of nave has 1840s seating and panelled dado and fireplace on south wall, C20 brasses and plaques to Hoare family. Monuments in the south aisle to Hoare family reset here in C19; fine marble monument against south wall to Henry Hoare died 1785, creator of Stourhead Gardens, signed by C. Harris, 1789, another on east wall to Henry Hoare died 1724 with broken pediment, corinthian columns and flanking urns. White marble monument to Hester Hoare died 1785 with inscription recording its erection by Richard colt Hoare who died 1838. Nave walls have mostly C19 classical marble tablets to Hoares and others, gilded plaque on north aisle to record restoration in 1722-23 by Nathaniel Ireson, mason of Stourhead House and John Butcher, churchwardens. Recumbent effigy of woman in north aisle, probably Lady Stourton died c1400, cartouche over to Mary Ireson, wife of Nathaniel, died 1723. An important element in the Stourhead landscape and connected with its creators the Hoares from the C18 to C20. (N. Pevsner, *The Buildings of England, Wiltshire*, 1975; K. Woodbridge, *The Stourhead Landscape*, 1982)

### *Monuments*

*Churchyard cross about 10m north- east of Chancel. Grade II.*

Churchyard cross. Late Medieval and c1900. Limestone. Circular plinth to square base with chamfered corners chamfered square section Latin cross with moulded faces and letters IHS in circle at intersection.

*Three Faugain monuments between 1.5 and 5 metres north of tower. Grade II.*

Two chest tombs and one body tomb. Late C18 to early C19. Two to south are limestone, north one blue lias. South chest tomb with two plain panels and beaded

pilasters, moulded flat top, inscription to Francis Faugoin died 1788. Large body tomb on moulded plinth in centre with inscription on south side to John Faugoin died 17-7. Blue lias chest tomb to north has plain panels, pilasters with incised Greek key motif and weathered top, inscription to Felix Faugoin died 1823. Francis Faugoin was steward to Henry Hoare and supervised the garden landscaping. (K. Woodbridge, *The Stourhead Landscape*, 1982)

*Two Hoare monuments about 1 metre east of Church. Grade II.*

Two chest tombs with sarcophagi. Mid C18 chest tombs with early C19 sarcophagi, the latter placed there by Colt Hoare in 1817 and this recorded by plaque against chancel wall. Both chest tombs are limestone with chamfered bases and heavy chamfered flat tops, the north one with inscription to Jane Hoare, wife of Henry Hoare, died 1742, no legible inscription on south tomb. Sarcophagus on north tomb has narrow base on ball feet, plain recessed panels to sides, wider weathered top. South tomb has sarcophagus with plain recessed side panels, weathered top with antifixae, this tomb probably to Henry Hoare died 1785.

*Barnes monument about 1.5 metres north of Church. Grade II.*

Chest tomb. Mid C17. Limestone, constructed of large end and side slabs, badly weathered moulded flat top. Inscription on north side to Robert Barnes died 1690.

*Circular monument about 8 metres north of tower. Grade II.*

Monument or seat. Early C19. Limestone. Circular slightly weathered top on ten moulded ogee arches, approximately 1.5 metres diameter. The purpose of this is unknown, but it was possibly a seat and erected for Richard Colt Hoare, the work done by John Carter; ogee arches very similar to these were added to the Gothic Cottage (q.v.), for a seat by John Carter in 1806. (K. Woodbridge, *The Stourhead Landscape*, 1982)

*Hoare monument about 13 metres south east of chancel. Grade II.*

Chest tomb in mausoleum. Dated 1819 on inscription, to Richard Colt Hoare died 1838. Limestone ashlar mausoleum in Gothic style with diagonal buttresses, Tudor-arched openings on north, east and west sides, blind arch to south, cornice to parapet with pierced cusped triangles and corner pinnacles, three heraldic shields on north side over door. Roof removed. Interior south wall has bronze plaque with names of members of Hoare family and restored carved spread eagle, their crest; against this wall is small marble chest tomb with antifixae and weathered top, Latin inscription to Ricardus (sic) Colt Hoare died 1838. The chest tomb was ordered from Florence 1819. Colt Hoare was an important Wiltshire antiquarian, published a *History of Wiltshire* in five volumes, 1822-1837, he also extended Stourhead House (q.v.). (K. Woodbridge, *The Stourhead Landscape*, 1982)