

# St Mary the Virgin Dallington - History

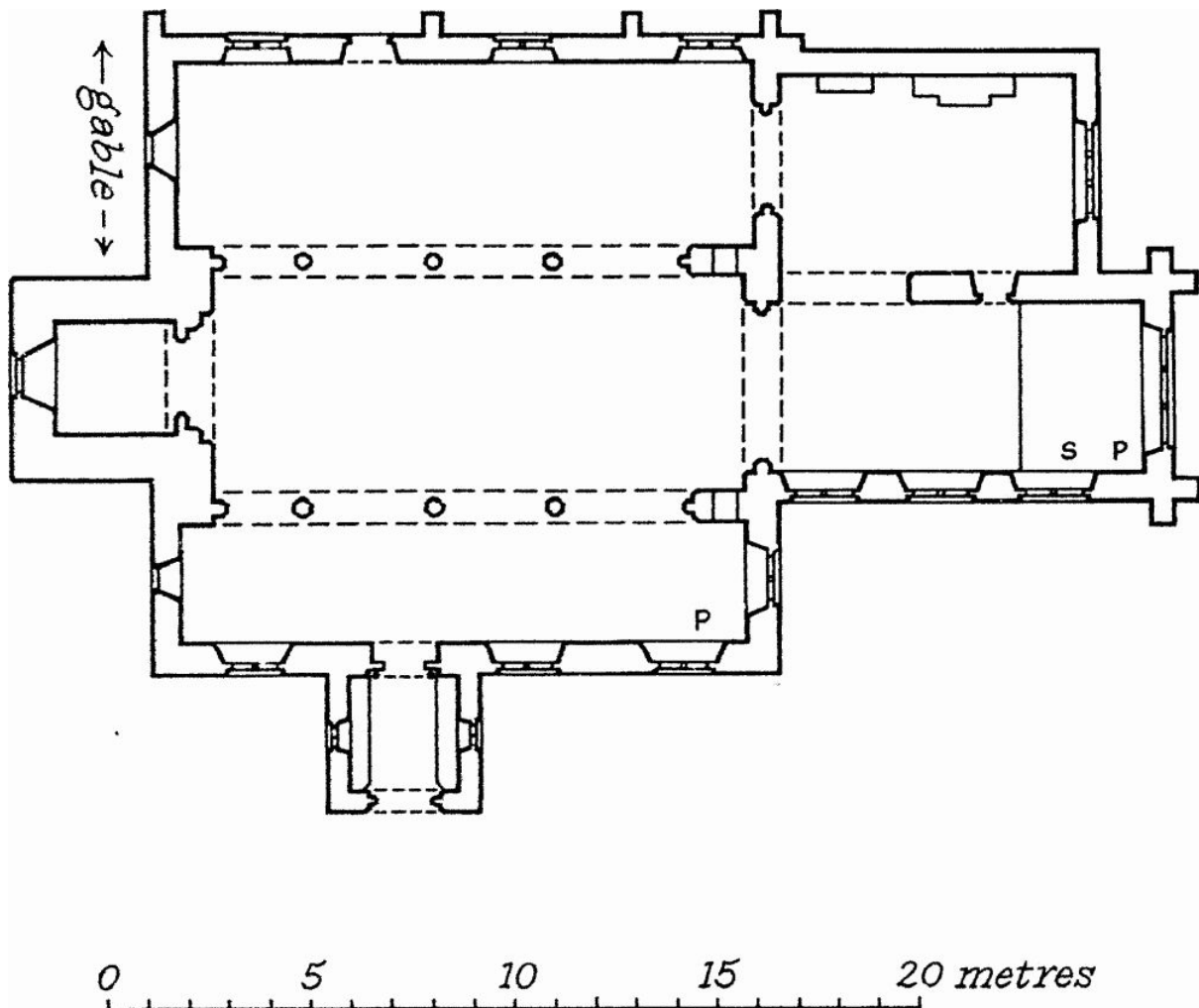
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## Development

The earliest surviving elements in the fabric date from the early 13th century. The only hints of an earlier, Romanesque, church is the stepped relationship between the N. wall of the nave and the chancel and the uneven spacing of the nave arcades. On this hypothesis, in the Romanesque church the S. wall of the chancel would have run half a wall thickness to the N. of its present position and the W. wall of the nave would have been in line with the present western nave piers. In the 13th century the nave was lengthened and the aisles and tower added. The S. porch was added about 1300. In the 14th century the S. wall of the chancel was moved half a wall thickness to the S. and the present arcades, tower and chancel arches inserted. The cloistery was probably added c. 1500. The body of the church was restored in 1880 and the chancel in 1883. New windows were inserted in the aisles and cloistery and the E. wall of the chancel rebuilt 4 ft. to the E. (*Northampton Mercury*, 11 Dec. 1880; faculty NRO 95P/172).

## History

Although there was a priest in Dallington in 1086 (*DB* f. 222a) there is no other evidence of a church there at this early date. Throughout most of the medieval period Dallington Church was in the patronage of Flamstead Priory (Herts) founded c. 1150 (Knowles and Hadcock 1971, 258) and the medieval dedication of the church to St. Giles (*LAO Register* XII, f. 76r; Franklin 1982, 118) perhaps reflects this. It has been customary to date the acquisition of Dallington by Flamstead to sometime between 1150 and the 1220's (Franklin 1982, 118, following Bridges 1 1791, 494) but four confirmatory charters in the Flamstead cartulary (HRO no. 17465 f. 13v-14r) clearly indicate the existence of a church at Dallington by the end of the reign of Henry II.



## escription

The church consists of a Chancel, North Chancel Chapel/Vestry, Nave, North and South Aisles, South Porch and West Tower.

### Chancel

At the W. end of the N. wall is a 19th-century archway leading into the N. chapel. To the E. of the archway is a doorway with a chamfered, two-centred head, now opening into the N. chapel but formerly into a medieval chapel or vestry. To the E. of the doorway is a straight-headed recess. The E. wall was rebuilt in 1883, one wall thickness to the E. The three-light E. window formerly had reticulated tracery (Clarke). At the E. end of the S. wall is a piscina of c. 1300, with a two-centred head and continuous roll mouldings. The S. wall was also much rebuilt in 1883 but the three two-light windows, though renewed, retain their original quatrefoil tracery design. Under the westernmost window is a straight-headed low-side window. The chancel roof is 19th-century.

### North Chancel Chapel

The chapel was built in 1679 as a funerary chapel for the Raynsford family and retains four fine 17th and 18th-century monuments. It is now used as a vestry. The E. window is straight-headed and has three cinquefoil-headed lights with pierced spandrels.

### Nave

The N. arcade is of four bays, the westernmost being shorter than the others. The piers are polygonal, carry polygonal capitals and stand on polygonal bases. The bases are set on plinths (550 mm. high). The three cloistery windows have two trefoil-headed lights each. In the long E. respond of the arcade is a two-centred arch, probably of the 19th century; it is repeated on the S. wall. The chancel arch is symmetrical with the chancel but not with the nave; the arch is of two orders, the outer continuous, the inner carried on polygonal shafts with moulded capitals. The N. and S. responds differ in their detailing. Above the arch is an oculus, now blocked, set within moulded frame. In a drawing of 1851 by G. Clarke it was filled with quatrefoil tracery. The S. arcade is similar in spacing and in detailing to the N., except that the capitals, especially those of the E. respond and the westernmost pier, are more elaborately moulded. The cloistery windows are the same as on the N., although in the Clarke drawing of 1851 the windows are shown with straight heads but no mullions or tracery. The tower arch is of three chamfered orders, linked by a single chamfered base. The innermost order is carried on polygonal half-shafts with moulded capitals. The arch-braced roof is late-medieval. The octagonal font at the W. end of the nave is Perpendicular with shields enclosing quatrefoils on the bowl and a tracery-panelled stem.

### North Aisle

The N. wall has a continuous sill moulding running below the windows and around the buttresses. The wall appears extensively rebuilt, except around the N. doorway. The three windows are double lancets. The central mullion is expressed internally as a shaft. The N. doorway has a two-centred head and a simple impost moulding. The pointed arch of the doorway appears to have been originally semi-circular. The arch in the E. wall leading to the chapel is 19th-century. To the N. of the arch is a stone bracket. The W. window is a single lancet with a shafted rear-arch. The 19th-century roof is a lean-to but the gables of the medieval roof remain visible at the E. and W. ends. Set in the internal face of the N. wall is a stone fragment, carved with curious human or animal forms. It may be part of a Romanesque lintel set on end (Plate 35).

### South Aisle

The E. window is of two lights with a quatrefoil in the head. The internal face is shafted. In the S. wall are three double lancet windows of the 19th century, imitating the N. aisle windows. Under the easternmost window is a trefoil-headed piscina. The S. doorway has a round arch of two chamfered orders, the outer being carried on shafts with crude foliated capitals.

### South Porch

The E. window in the porch has two lights, and the W. one; both appear 13th-century. The outer S. doorway has two continuously chamfered orders and a trefoil-headed niche above

### Tower

The tower is unbuttressed and rises in two stages. The W. window is an insertion of 1863 but the belfry openings are double lancets. The parapet is battlemented and has small angle pinnacles.

(8) **Fishponds** (SP 731622–737619; fiche Fig. 26), lie along the bottom of the S.E.-draining valley of the Dallington Brook, cut into the underlying Upper Lias Clay between 68 m. and 76 m. above OD. The remains consist of three ponds, all probably medieval in origin, though the lower two have been considerably altered by post-medieval landscaping as part of the park of Dallington Hall in which they are situated. The upper pond,

now dry, still retains its original form. The lower ponds are shown in their present form on a map of Dallington of 1725 (NRO) and are called Middle and Lower Ponds. The upper one is depicted as dry and divided into two areas called Upper and Nether Fish Dam. The alteration of the ponds probably dates from about 1720 when the present hall was built by Sir Joseph Jekyll.

The lower pond is L-shaped with a rectangular flat island at its N.W. end. Its dam at the S.E. end is only a narrow one, faced with ashlar, and presumably early 18th century in date but with later repairs in brick. The centre pond, roughly rectangular in plan, has a large earthen dam at its S.E. end 2.5 m. high. Its upper side has a modern concrete facing with an 18th or 19th-century ashlar and brick sluice and channel through it. The upper pond has been formed by the cutting back of the valley sides to produce a flat-bottomed area 2.5 m.-3 m. below the natural hill slope. The dam at its S.E. end is a massive feature up to 3 m. in height, though much altered by later landscaping including a low rubble wall at its rear. The Dallington Brook which once flowed down the valley is now in an artificial leat to the N. of the ponds and has 18th or 19th-century sluices which passed water into the lower ponds. The leat has modern concrete retaining walls in places, but is almost certainly medieval in origin (CBA Group 9 *Newsletter* 12 (1982), 41; NDC M339; RAF VAP, V58-RAF-1122, 0197-9).

From the [Northampton.gov.uk](http://Northampton.gov.uk) website. Dallington Conservation Area.