

# ***Our Lady and St Nicholas***



***Wanlip  
Leicestershire***

Although the present church was built over 600 years ago there was a church at Wanlip before A.D. 1155 as it is reported that by that time Richard L'Abbe has already given it to the Abbey of St Mary of the Meadow at Leicester. (Founded 1143)

The Parish Church at Wanlip is the centre of the local community, as such the building is subject to change to meet the needs of that community. Since this guide was first published in 1967 there have been changes to the church, the guide has been updated to reflect these changes.

The biggest change to affect the church has left no tangible evidence upon the fabric. This change occurred in 1983 when the Benefice of Wanlip was united with the Benefice of Birstall to form the ecclesiastical parish of Birstall and Wanlip. The newly formed parish having two parish churches – St James the Great, Birstall and Our Lady & St Nicholas, Wanlip.

The building we have inherited today is witness to the care taken by the preceding generations of the worshiping community, it is our obligation to pass on to future generations a building that is both in good condition and 'fit for purpose'. Above all we must do all we can to nurture the future generations of the worshipping community for without them the building will become nothing but an empty shell with no purpose.

*John F Ward - Churchwarden  
October 2009*

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F.G. Fletcher  
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December 1967

The greater part of the present church, excluding the south aisle added in 1904, was built about 1393 in the Perpendicular style and is constructed of local red granite from the quarries at Mountsorrel. Much of the tower, however, probably dates from the thirteenth century and was part of an earlier church on the site.

The church is rectangular, the distinction between nave and chancel being clearly shown by the carved oak bosses in the ceiling. There is, in addition, the south aisle and the tower already mentioned. The tower is a plain structure of two stages with an embattled parapet.

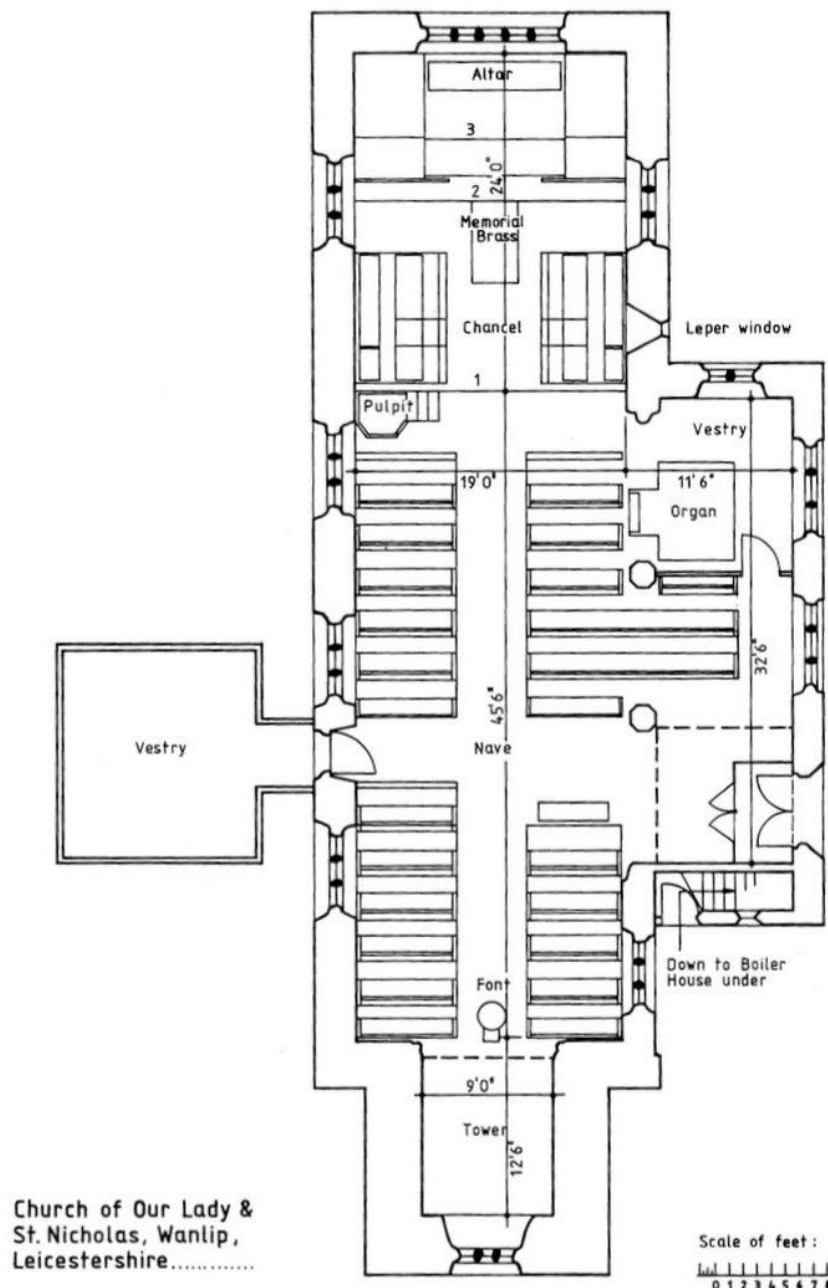
There is no record of maintenance of the building during the nineteenth century, by the end of which its condition was such that the nave roof was supported by poles from the floor. (see photograph on page 5).

In 1904, besides the addition of the south aisle, the high family pews were replaced by oak furniture, pulpit and choir stalls. A hot water central heating installation (converted first to an oil fired system in 1965, and then to a gas fired system in 1996) replaced a combustion stove in the Palmer family pew. During this period of restoration, divine service was held in a large barn and in the village school, both now demolished.

In a niche over the south door stands a small statuette of St Nicholas. Upon entering the church it is evident that the pillars of the south aisle arches were concealed for a long time in a main wall and that their bases are buried. It appears that in 1796 the old south aisle was demolished and windows placed in the archways and that the construction of the Palmer vault made it necessary to raise the floor twenty inches. The pillars were not exposed again until the present south aisle was built. This, with other work of restoration, cost nearly £2,000.

A plaque on the south wall of the aisle commemorates the provision of electric lighting in the church in 1935 in memory of Lady Augusta Ameila Palmer.

The door in the north wall was the access to the church from Wanlip Hall. The present timber extension beyond the door has been in use as a choir vestry since 1952.



*Church of Our Lady & St Nicholas,  
Wanlip, Leicester*

In the west end of the nave is the font of Italian marble which was given at the time of the 1796 restoration by Mr. Alsop, a local farmer, who lies buried near the church door. Immediately beyond the font is the tower arch which was opened in 1904 when the west door to the tower was built up. the glazed oak screen separating the tower from the nave was installed in 1980.

The window in the tower was erected in 1910, by parishioners and friends of William Henry Palmer, M.A., Rector 1875-1907. It cost about £40. The oak ladder in the tower is believed to be as old as the church itself and the timber of which it is made may well be 200 years older!

In the tower are three pre-Reformation bells inscribed as follows:

Geret nomen Magdalene campana  
Sancte Nicholane Ora pro nobis  
Geve thankes to God

These bells were recast in 1952 and three new bells dedicated, with the following inscriptions:

Friendship (The Rector and Churchwardens Bell)  
Service (The Wanlip Church Ladies' Working Party Bell)  
The Goscote (The Goscote Bell)

In the windows in the north wall of the church are the following heraldic arms, which are apparently reproductions of much earlier heraldry, formerly located in the windows round the church:

1. The western-most window
  - the quarterings of France and England
2. The next window
  - the armorial bearings of
    - (a) Carolus Grave-Hudson, Baronettus 1813  
(taken from an escutcheon formerly in the church)
    - (b) Gulielmus Palmer, Armiger 1626

3. The window by the pulpit
  - the armorial bearings of
  - (a) Johannes Aston, Miles 1511
  - (b) Thomas Welsh, Miles Fundator 1393
4. The chancel window
  - (a) Alma Rob'ti Henrici Aubel', Rectoris de Wanlip (Rector 1831-1837)
  - (b) a conglomeration of ancient stained glass

The bearings in 2 and 3 above are those of former patrons of the living.

The stained glass window above the altar was 'erected in 1909 by Lady Augusta, widow of Sir Archdale Robert Palmer, in his memory'.

An earlier window in the chancel showed a knight kneeling with his wife by his side, and had the following inscription:

Orate Pro Anima Thomas Welsh, Militis, Qui Hoc  
Templum Fieri Fecit MCCCLXXXIII, Et Pro Anima  
Katherine Uxoris Ejus

A low window is strangely sited on the south side of the chancel and its original purpose can only be surmised.

The slate tablets in the chancel on which are carved the Ten Commandments are probably post-Reformation.

In 1959 the chancel, including the choir stalls, was modified, a new altar provided and the interior plastering of the church renovated and lime-washed. The altar, of English oak, is a memorial to Ernest Shuttle-wood, churchwarden for twenty years. During this work the small apse on the south wall of the sanctuary was discovered. This may have been part of a sedilia, or a credence with piscina, when the church floor was much lower.

In 1990 the dorsal curtain that had been installed behind the altar in the 1959 renovations was removed and the Reredos refurbished.

The chancel and nave were further modified in 1993 when, to allay the effects of damp, the plaster was removed from the lower levels of the walls. The church was redecorated at the same time.

An earlier organ was removed from the chancel to the south aisle in 1904. The present instrument, built by Hill in 1916, was extended in 1937 in memory of William Hunt, who was for fifty years voluntary organist and choirmaster.

There are a number of mural tablets. Two are particularly fine. They are in memory of members of the Palmer family and have Latin inscriptions and bear the family arms. The tablet high on the wall of the south aisle refers to the oval shaped stone in the floor beneath. This is the site of a grave which was outside the church before the 1904 restoration.

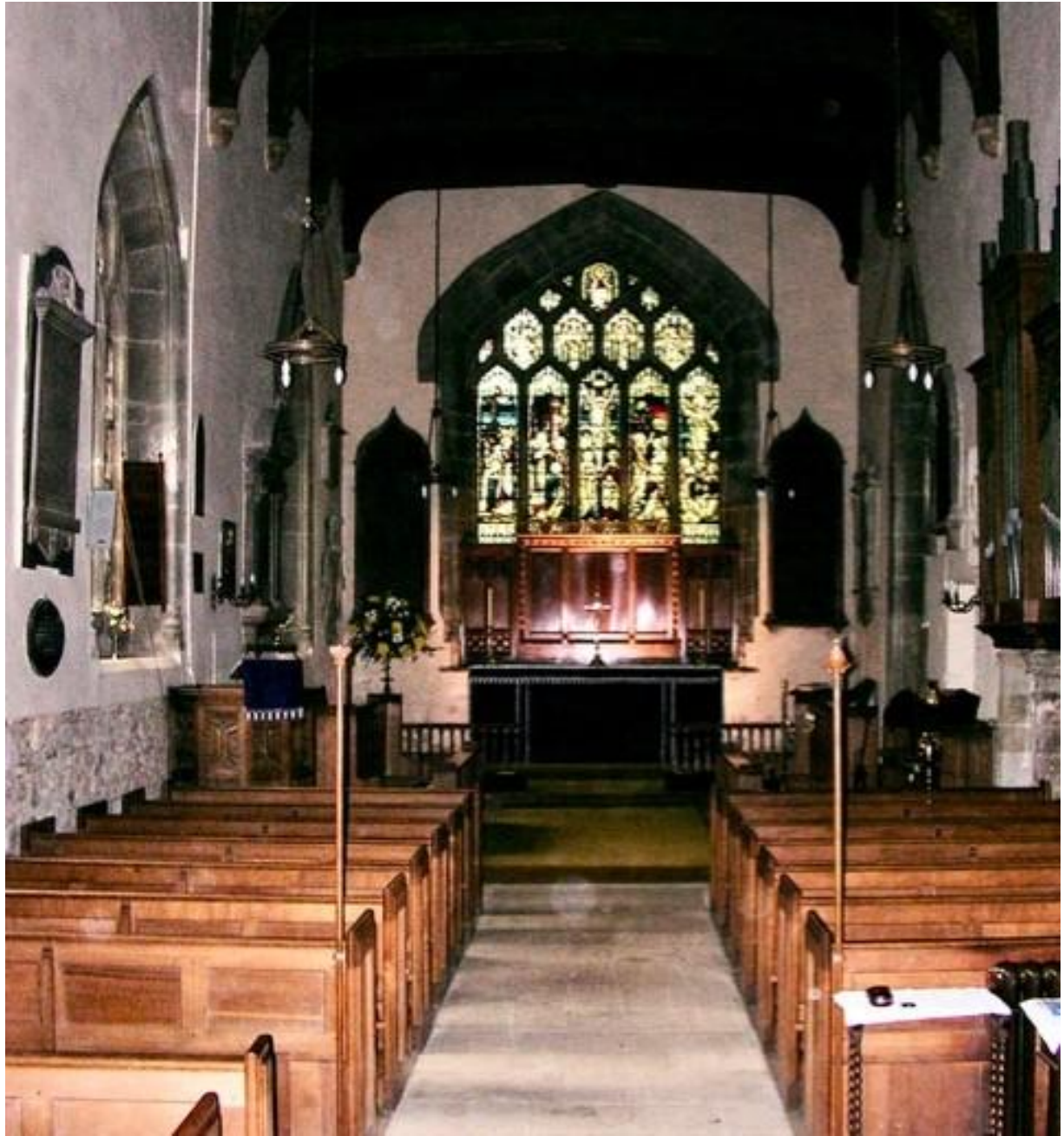
The men of Wanlip who gave their lives in the Great War are remembered in the tablet on the north wall. Above this memorial tablet are details of the Spencer Charities of 1710 and 1714. One of the trustees is the rector of the parish. It is of interest to note that the Walter Spencer Charity lapsed over 150 years ago because of the inability of the overseers to collect the rent charges.

Above the door in the north wall is the hatchment of George I.

On the north wall in the chancel, opposite the Rectors stall is a small icon, the gift of the Rev M. N. Phillips in 1974.

The brass lectern is a memorial to Sir Archdale Palmer, Bart, who died in 1906.





*Interior 2006*



The outstanding feature of the church is the memorial brass in the floor of the chancel. The inscription reads:

*'Here lyes Thomas Walsh, Knyght, lorde of Anlep, and dame Katine (Katherine) his wyfe, whiche in yer (their) tyme made the kirke of A-nlep and halud (hallowed) the kirkyerd first in wirchip of God, and of oure Lady and seynt Nicholas, that God have yer (their) soules and mercy. Anno dni millmo eee nonagesimo tercio (1393).'*

This is the earliest known brass to have the inscription in English (although the date is in Latin) and it is one of the finest in the country.

The figures on the brass, 4ft. 2 ins. long, represent the knight and his lady. The former is wearing armour of what is known as the Camail period. On his head he wears a bascinet, from which hangs the camail or protection for his neck consisting of a leather foundation covered with interlacing rings of metal in the form of banded mail; over his body he is protected by a shirt of mail under a tight-fitting leather garment known as a jupon. On his arms and legs he has plate armour, and there is a sword by his side.

The lady has an elegant reticulated head-dress, and is attired in a close-fitting garment fastened in the front and along the arms with a number of small buttons. Over all she wears a loose mantle.

The heraldic devices, which were once over the head of each figure, have long since vanished. The symbols in the four corners represent the four Evangelists - St. John, an eagle; St. Mark, a lion (this is missing); St. Matthew, a man; and St. Luke, an ox.

A Housling Cloth, believed to be the only one in the county, is not on view because of its fragile condition. This is a strip of linen, eighteen inches wide, made about 1816, which stretches the whole width of the altar rail, and is embroidered with crosses at intervals where each communicant knelt, with hands placed beneath, to receive the communion.

The church possesses some fine altar silver. The chalice and paten both bear the inscription 'The guift of Archdale Palmer, Esq. to the Parish Church of Onlepp, 1636'. Archdale Palmer was born in 1609 and was twice High Sheriff of Leicestershire. He made this gift to the church soon after he succeeded his father to the Wanlip estates. He died on 6<sup>th</sup> August 1673 and is buried in the church.



The silver dish is of German make and dates from approximately 1680. It has a beaten pattern of flowers and foliage, and in the centre is a winged heart with clouds above and below. This is thought to represent divine love as shown to man by the Incarnation of the Son of God.

The silver flagon dates from approximately 1780 and bears a Lisbon assay mark. Both this and the dish were presented to the church in 1815 by Sir Charles Thomas Palmer, Bart. Sir Charles was the eldest son of Sir Charles Grave Hudson, Bart., and he assumed the name of Palmer upon succeeding to the Wanlip estates in 1813. He died on 20<sup>th</sup> April 1827 and was buried at Wanlip.

It is recorded that at the time of the building of the church 'the Lady built an extraordinary large barn for the use of the husbandmen, in which they could turn a team of six horses. It was taken down about 1750 and cost about as much building as the Church within 10d'. (4p)

Although the present church was built nearly 600 years ago, there was a church at Wanlip before A.D. 1155, as it is reported that by that time Richard l'Abbe had already given it to the Abbey of St. Mary of the Meadow at Leicester.

Richard l'Abbe (or Pincerna, otherwise Butler) was the grandson of the Butler of Robert de Belloment who was created Earl of Leicester in 1103 by Henry I. Previous Earls of Leicester had held Wanlip, in the King's gift, before 1086 when Domesday Book was compiled.

In 1248 the Abbot of Leicester granted the advowson of the church to Sir William Waleys (or Walshe) who was then the Lord of Wanlip, through the right of his mother Agnes, wife of Roger of Waleys. It is possible that Agnes was an heiress of l'Abbe. (It is doubtful whether Wanlip possessed the full rights of a parish church before 1393, which would account for the expression 'halud the kirkyerd' in the memorial brass). In due course, again through female succession, Sir Edward Aston inherited the patronage of the living in 1511 and, in turn, his successor, Sir Walter Aston, created Baron Aston of Forfar in 1628, sold Wanlip to Mr. William Palmer in 1626. The patron of the benefice today is his kinsman, Mr. J. E. Palmer-Tomkinson.

The early chapel was dedicated to St. Nicholas, and it was not until the building of the present church that the dedication included a reference to Our Lady. There were two reasons for this. In 1393, Wanlip was under the aegis of Lincoln Cathedral of the Blessed Mary and, in addition, Sir Thomas Walsh's forbears were Crusaders. Many of the Crusader knights claimed the protection and guidance of Our Lady in their missions. The fact that the Walsh family participated in the Crusades is confirmed by the fact that a lion (and not a dog) is at the feet of Sir Thomas in the memorial brass.



In 1849 the church's dedication was to St. Nicholas alone, but 50 years later it was known as St. Mary and St. Nicholas. Today it has the same dedication as it had when it was erected in 1393 – Our Lady and St. Nicholas.



*Interior prior to 1904*



*Interior 1959*

In the churchyard, which is close to the River Soar, are many Swithland slate memorials. The oldest dates from 1707. Among the more interesting gravestones is one of 183~ to Rasselas Morjan, an Abyssinian, who, after rescue from slavery, died whilst in the service of the family of Sir George Joseph Palmer, Bart., at Wanlip Hall. The inscription reads:

*Sacred  
To the memory of Rasselas MOljan,  
who was born at Macadi, on the confines of Abyssinia, and died at  
Wanlip Hall, August 25th, 1839, in the 19th year of his age. Rescued  
from a state of slavery in this life and enabled by God's  
grace to become a member of His church. He rests here in the hope  
of a greater deliverance hereafter. This stone is raised in  
remembrance of his blameless life by one whom he loved.*



A new cope has been commissioned to commemorate the 600<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the church. The theme is that of Darkness into Light, simbolizing the Anti-Slavery movement. The edge is decorated with snowdrops (for which the church grounds are renowned), individually embroidered by members of the congregation.



The memorials in the churchyard to the Palmer family date from the nineteenth century. Before that their remains were placed in a vault beneath the church. The vault was constructed in 1796 and sealed in 1904.

The churchyard was extended in 1965, and the path to the church repaired. The adjoining car park was laid out in 1960. The iron gates at the entrance to the churchyard were given in 1986 in memory of Harold Northwood who was churchwarden for 25 years.



## List of Parish Priests

<i>Date Instituted</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Patron</i>
1220	Walter the Clerk	Abbot & Convent of Leicester
1230	Walter de Bristol	Abbot & Convent of Leicester
1233	Walkelin de Rol	Abbot & Convent of Leicester
1277	Peter Walensis (or Waleys)	Sir William Walsh
	Walter le Waleys	Sir William Walsh
1288	William le Waleys	Sir William Walsh
1331	John de Reygate	John le Walsh
1332	Perceval de Nevill	John le Walsh
1367	Robert Sheflord	Thomas Walsh
1389	Robert Erdburgh (or Burgh)	Sir Thomas Walsh
1392	Raymond Barker	Sir Thomas Walcsche
1394	John Boulande	Sir Thomas Walche
1407	William J egur	Katherine Walsh
1408	William J egyr	Katherine Walsch
1416	John Melreth	Katherine Walsh
1418	John Prestwold	Katherine Walsh
	John Hill	
1450	Roger Colman	Richard Walch
1462	Roger Gaucell	Thomas Walch
1464	John Leson	Robert Staunton
1483	Roger Broun (or Browne)	Margery Staunton
1493	Nicholas Hyntyys (or Hyntes)	Margery Staunton
1500	John Thorman	Margery Staunton
1539	Peter Cleyton	Sir Edward Aston
1542	Richard Spenser	Sir Edward Aston
1562	Henry Stamforde	Sir Edward Aston
1569	Hugh Wardle	
1579	John Cooke	Queen Elizabeth I
1582	Robert Cooper	Queen Elizabeth I
1619	William Jefferys	Sir Walter Aston
1629	Richard Benskin	William Palmer
1646	J. Muston	William Palmer
1646	John Smith	William Palmer
1646	Thomas Weld	William Palmer

1650	William Troughton	William Palmer
1660	Matthew Patchet (or Paget)	
1660	Edward Smyth	King Charles II
1662	Gilbert Woodward	William Palmer
1699	Richard Wood	Archdale Palmer
1703	Thomas Horton	Archdale Palmer
1739	George Cardale	Ann Palmer
1770	Robert Burnaby	Henry Palmer
1807	John Anderson (or Andrews)	Sir Chas. Grave Hudson
1813	Harry Barnes	Sir Chas. Grave Hudson
1818	William Cleaver	Sir Chas. Thomas Palmer
1831	Richard Henry Auber	Sir Joseph Palmer
1837	Charles Archdale Palmer	Sir George Joseph Palmer
1861	F. A. Babington	Sir George Joseph Palmer
1875	William H. Palmer	Sir Archdale Palmer
1907	Arthur O. James	Lady Augusta Palmer
1933	Ilsey W. Charlton	Lady Augusta Palmer
1934	Frederick W. Walker	J. E. Palmer-Tomkinson
1935	Cecil G. Thornton	J. E. Palmer-Tomkinson
1944	Francis W. Pratt	J. E. Palmer-Tomkinson
1955	Arthur A. Lander	J. E. Palmer-Tomkinson

### **Rectors of the combined Parish of Birstall and Wanlip**

1983	Martin N Phillips	C. Palmer-Tomkinson & the Bishop of Leicester
1989	Charles A Bradshaw	C. Palmer-Tomkinson & the Bishop of Leicester
1999	Malcom Lambert	C. Palmer-Tomkinson & the Bishop of Leicester
2005	James Shakespeare ( <i>Priest in Charge</i> )	C. Palmer-Tomkinson & the Bishop of Leicester
2009	James Shakespeare ( <i>Instituted Rector</i> )	C. Palmer-Tomkinson & the Bishop of Leicester
2011	Vince Jupp	C. Palmer-Tomkinson & the Bishop of Leicester
2121	Amanda Digman	C. Palmer-Tomkinson & the Bishop of Leicester



