

## SAINT PETER'S CHURCH.

A Church of St. Peter is mention in Domesday Book. Excavations by the Northampton Development Corporation 1973-6 uncovered much evidence of Saxon and later occupation in this area including an earlier church with a possible date of 700 CE. The church we see was built in about 1160, probably by Simon de Senlis II. The arcade was shortened at the west end when the tower was rebuilt in the reign of James I [1603-25]. At the same time the east end also lost half a bay; this, however was rebuilt during the restoration of 1851.



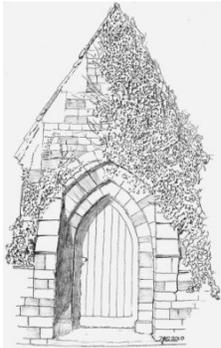
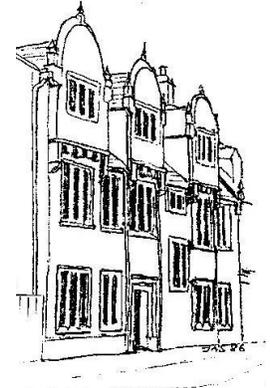
Memorials in the church include a tablet to the memory of John Smith the mezzotint engraver; a bust of Dr. William Smith - "Strata Smith, The Father of English Geology" and a memorial to his friends Mr. and Miss Baker, historians and residents of Hazelrigg Mansion where he was staying when he died.

There is a remarkable piece of carved stone standing in the south aisle said to be connected with St. Ragner, killed by the Danes in 870. It is said his tomb was discovered in St. Peter's Church during the reign of Edward the Confessor [1042-66]. St. Ragner's stone is not the only carving worth looking at; the whole interior has fine examples of early stonemasons' work. Recently the church has been restored including the wall painting on the east wall, behind the altar. The Church is now in the care of The Churches Conservation Trust.

## INTERESTING FEATURES TO SEE ON THE WAY

### HAZELRIGG MANSION. →

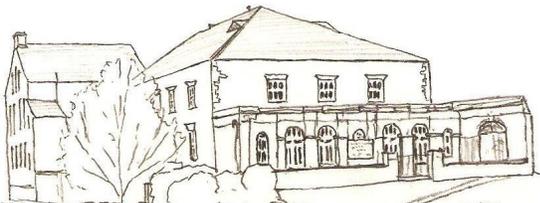
The building is Elizabethan and escaped the Great Fire of 1675. It originally had five bays, but now only has three. It belonged to the Hazelrigg family, who owned the Castle. Tradition has it that Cromwell slept here before the Battle of Naseby, hence the alternative name of "Cromwell House".



### ← POSTERN GATE.

Set into the stone wall leading to the railway station is an ancient stone gateway. This is one of the Postern Gates recovered from the Castle when it was demolished and quarried away when the station was built in the 1860s.

## CASTLE HILL MEETING (UNITED REFORM CHURCH).

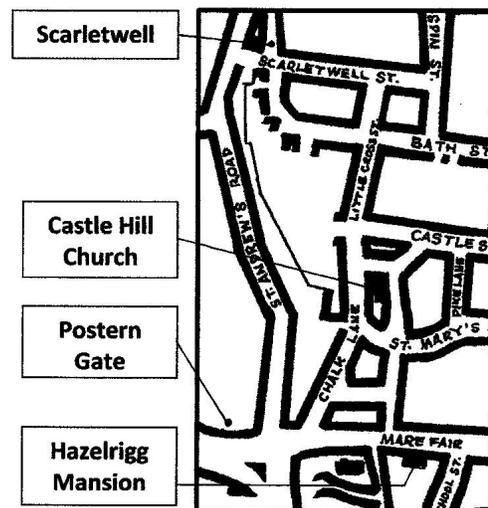


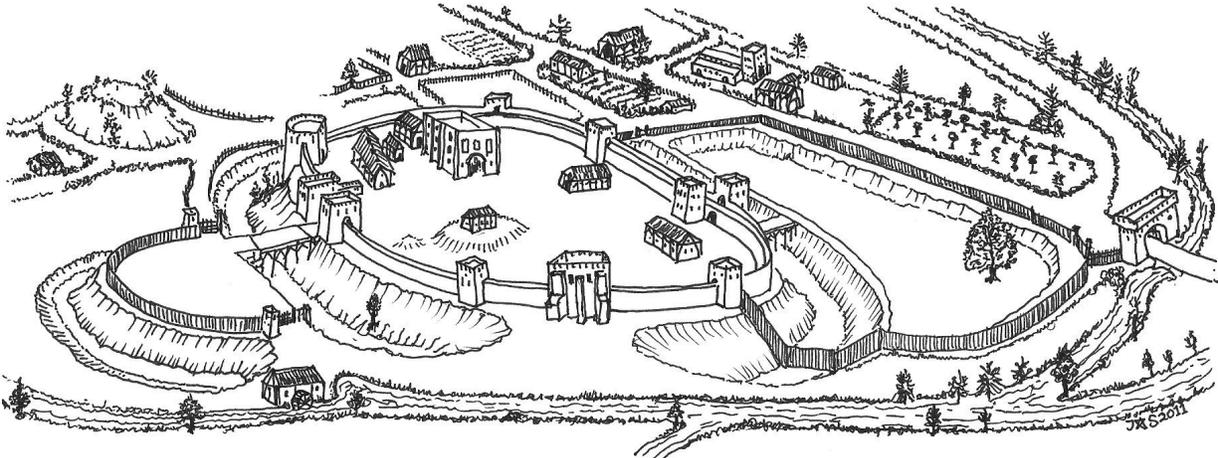
The Nonconformist preacher and writer, Phillip Doddridge D.D. [1702-51] was for 22 years the minister of **Castle Hill Meeting**, an Independent congregation at Northampton [1729-51]. He was a powerful preacher, wrote many hymns, and did useful work as a Biblical commentator. He was the head of an Academy for the education of young men

for the Ministry, and later for business. Dr. Doddridge's Academy, as it became known was famous in its time for its high standard of education. He found time to help found the Northampton Hospital, contribute papers on scientific subjects to the Northampton Philosophical Society and when the Pretender invaded England in 1745 supported Lord Halifax in the raising of a Regiment of Yeomanry.

### THE SCARLEWELL.

At the north-western end of Scarletwell Street is the site of the Scarletwell used in days past in the dying of cloth. There is a charter dating from 1239 that refers to this street.





*This is an artist's impression of what the Castle might have looked like around 1300.*

## NORTHAMPTON CASTLE.

*“The Castel standeth hard by the West-gate and hath a large Kepe. The Area of the residue is very large, and the bullewarke of yerth be made afore the castelle gate.”*

From the *Itinerary* 1536 by Leland [Henry VIII's librarian].

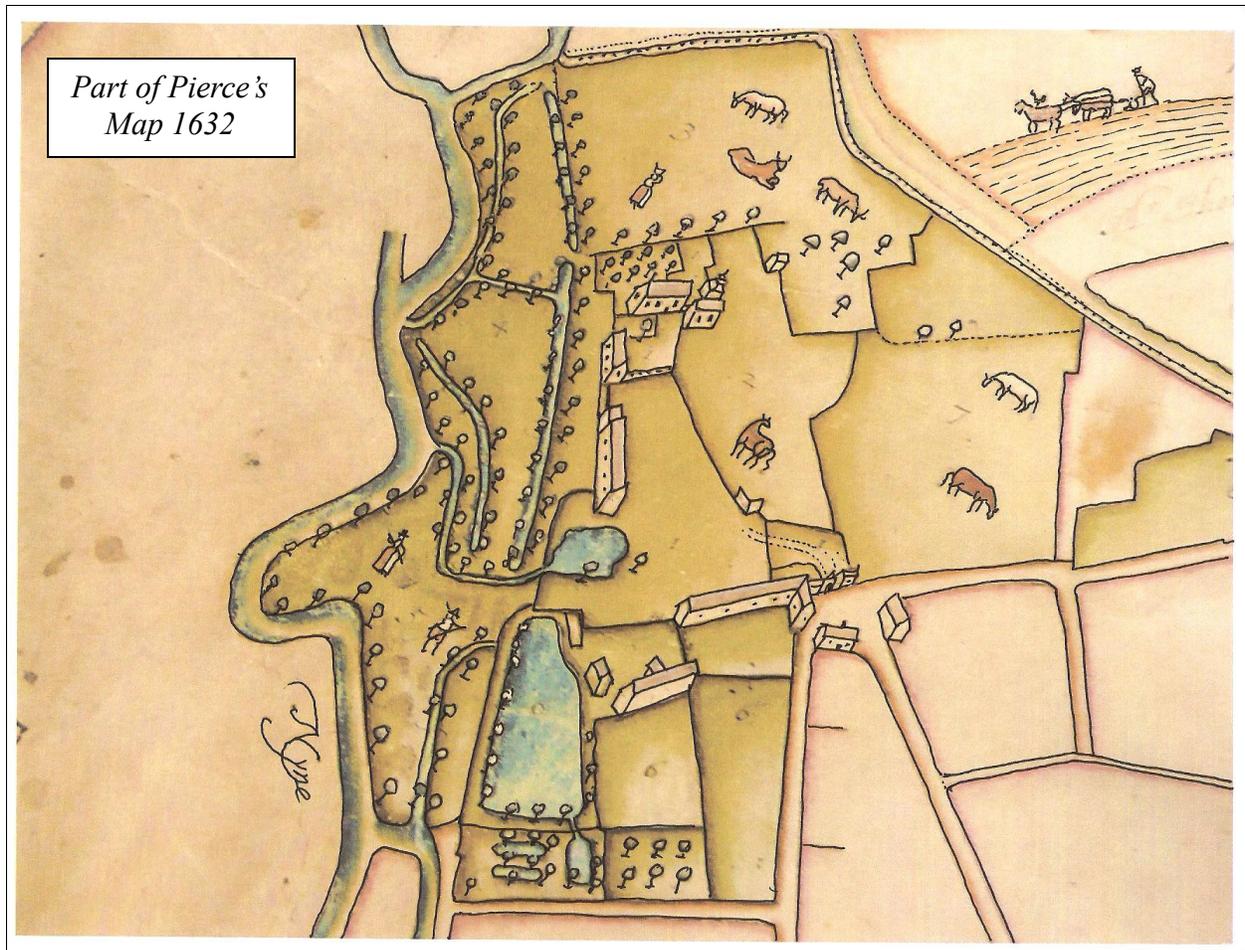
Nothing visible now remains of the Castle but a few stones, part of the earthworks associated with the North Gate of the Castle and a rebuilt postern gate near the railway station. The Castle was probably built by Simon de Senlis I circa 1084, but there was probably some sort of Saxon or Danish fortifications here earlier. In 1130 the Castle was in the hands of King Henry I and remained a royal castle from then on. In 1164 Thomas Becket [later, Saint] was called before a Grand Council of Barons in an attempt to try him; he refused to recognise their authority and fled to France.

King John [1199-1216] stayed here on thirty occasions and in 1205 he moved the Treasury to the Castle. Many Parliaments were held here the last being in 1381. Northampton had been growing in importance and had now reached its zenith and by the close of the 14<sup>th</sup> century it began decline. Norden wrote in 1593, *“This town is a faire towne, with faire old buildings, large streets, and a very ample and faire market-place; it is walled about with a wall of stone, but mean too of strength; near unto the towne there standeth an eminent castle, ruinous.”*

During the Civil War Northampton was on the Parliamentary side and various precautions were taken, the Town walls and the Castle were refurbished. After the Restoration Charles II ordered the destruction of the town walls and the Castle. *“His Majesty is content y<sup>e</sup> so much of it should remain as is necessary for y<sup>e</sup> shelter of y<sup>e</sup> Justices in y<sup>e</sup> Bench.”*

The site was sold to Robert Haselrig [later Hazelrigg] in whose family it remained until 1861. It was then sold to Samuel Walker who dug it for treasure [I wonder if he found any?] and then he sold it to the L&NW Railway Co. who levelled the site to build a station.

The Castle survives, at least in literature; Shakespeare set the fourth act of “King John” in Northampton Castle.



## SAINT ANDREW'S PRIORY.

Nothing now remains of the Priory, except for local place-names and the shape of the enclosure preserved in the street plan.

St. Andrew's Priory was a Cluniac monastery, an off-shoot of the Benedictines (Black Monks) with the mother priory at La Charité in France. It was established by Simon de St Liz (Senlis) between 1093 and 1100. It was granted charge of all the churches in the Town, was very well endowed and from the first was of great importance. The priors were appointed by La Charité and were always a foreigner. The priory was not popular in the Town and during the siege of Northampton in 1264 they betrayed us by letting in royalist men into their enclosure and then out into the Town. After a war with France Henry IV in 1405 ordered that future priors were to be freely elected and must be English and of English birth.

In later years the priory slowly fell into decay and the house surrendered to Henry VIII during the Dissolution on the 2<sup>nd</sup> March 1538, the prior becoming the first dean of Peterborough.

*St. Andreas, the late monastery of blake monkes, stooode yn the north parte of the toune, hard by the north gate. Simon Sainteliz the first being erle of Northampton and Huntendone made this house: but he is not buried here, for he dyed in France and there buried. But Erle Simon the second and Erle Simon the 3, sunne to the seconde, were both buried in S. Andreas. There was also buried under a flat stone*

*in the quier an archbishop. There was also one Varney that was made knight at the field of Northampton.*

Leyland, written a year after he visited Northampton.

The enclosure can be traced through the present streets. St. Andrew's Road on the west, on the south east along Spring Lane, north along Lower Harding Street to Grafton Square, east along Grafton Street to Regent Square and then north-west along St. George's Street and west along Mill Lane. Until a few years ago, before the construction of the flats; St. Stephen's, St Barnabas', St. John's, St Luke's and St. Mark's Houses there ran across here a thoroughfare called Bell Barn Lane. It seems there was a barn at the end of this lane with a bell in it, evidently part of the priory buildings. Mill Lane to the north once led to the priory mill.

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*Holy Sepulchre Church (St. Sep's).*

## HOLY SEPULCHRE CHURCH – (“ST. SEP’S”).

The Church of the Holy Sepulchre, Northampton; called locally, St. Sepulchre’s, or just St. Sep’s and in the past even St. Pulchre is an unusual church being round. In the past only nine of these round churches were built in England and now only four survive (London, Little Mapelstead in Essex, Cambridge and here) Northampton’s is the best preserved of them all. It is also probably the oldest surviving building in the Town.

The unusual shape has in the past given rise to theories as to who and why it was built, in the eighteenth century some thought it was originally the Synagogue as we had a large number of Jews living in the Town before their expulsion in 1290, actually, the synagogue was in Sheep Street. Traditionally round churches were either built by the Knights Templars or the Knights Hospitallers, though in this case, none of these theories are correct.

St. Sep’s was probably built around 1100 by Simon de Senlis I after his safe return from the first Crusade. Whilst he was out there he saw the original Church of the Holy Sepulchre built by Constantine the Great on the site of a round temple of Venus built by Emperor Hadrian over the reputed tomb of Joseph of Arimathea and it is thought that Simon de Senlis modelled his church on the original. It is, however small in size than the original in Jerusalem. In 1116 Senlis gave the church to the monks of St. Andrew’s Priory who kept it until the Dissolution.

The original church would have only been the round part with probably a small chancel to the east, the north chapel was added circa 1200 with the tower being added in the fifteenth century - the present enlargements were added in the 1860s. It is thought that there was a previous church, Saxon or Danish on the site.

There are many interesting features around this church. Outside to the south-west, near the south porch is a large recess that in the past probably held a monumental effigy. Inside the south porch in the right side, high up and almost out of sight is a “Saxon sundial”, this is probably a medieval prayer dial reused in the porch, for it is useless in its present position! Inside the original, round part of the church, is a monumental brass to the memory of George Coles who died in 1640, this is the only true brass in the Town’s churches, although there is a small brass plaque set into the floor before the chancel in St. Peter’s. As one enters through the south porch there is to the right a tall recess beside the steps to the south chapel. This feature has also been cause for speculation in the past, some believing it was where the knights (Templars?) put their lances when they came to church; however it is too short for such a purpose and is probably a storage locker for processional crosses.



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*For*

Friends of Northampton Castle [FoNC]

[www.northamptoncastle.com/](http://www.northamptoncastle.com/)