

## CONTRACT PLAN - 1343

The monks at Monkton, the overarching managers of our church and land activities during this era, were under the control of Christ Church Priory (later, 'Cathedral').

The Dean and Chapter must have either suggested - or agreed to – an enlargement of our church. The 1343 contract states that there was to be a new South Aisle, 'like the new North Aisle of St Nicholas at Wade'. This earlier enlargement has a very wide North aisle.

It is not stated in the contract, but from the way the work was begun, the monks had also envisaged a new West Tower, rather than the squat SE tower we already had. Work was begun at the west end of the south side of the church soon after the contract was signed.

The large pillar stands as solid evidence of this, along with its pilaster on the west wall. There is also a hole chiselled out of the south side of the pilaster, to support a beam for the ringing floor. On the s side of the large pillar, we can also see the truncated springers for the new arch. If you imagine this continuing outwards, you can see just how large this aisle was intended to be.

[The date of the contract is significant. The Black Death arrived in 1348, stopping all activity for a number of years - hence the reason for a change of plan.]

When work was restarted in about 1360, the Monks and Dean & Chapter decided to add two half aisles under a single roof span. This saved money, and probably labourers - both in very short supply – and was much easier to build. The masonry from the original N. & S. walls was re-used in the new lower external walls. On the south side of the church we can still see some of the pre-worked stones, dated to late-Saxon or early-Norman work.