



A History of All Saints Church, Enford

The oldest surviving portions of the present building are the walls and pillars of the nave, and the remnants of an early church arch. The chancel arch is late Norman, as is the doorway to the south porch. In the 13th century the style of the architecture changed rapidly, as the heavy Norman design gave way to lighter, more graceful lines, typified in the north aisle, the arcaded north wall of the chancel and the octagonal sacristy.

During the Middle Ages and for some time afterwards the church was almost bare, with the altar table being the only piece of furniture. The floor would have been strewn with rushes, and often scented herbs, which were replaced twice yearly. Burials in the church were the rule, although the church has no inscribed floor slabs older than 1740. There was probably a screen separating the nave from the chancel, substantial enough to support a rood cross. The church also housed the local school from as early as 1552 to the late 19th century, latterly in the north aisle.

In the 17th or 18th century a spire was added, but this collapsed in 1817. The south porch and doorway, severely damaged by the fall, were rebuilt from the original stones, as part of a major restoration between 1825 and 1830. A gallery, to house 12 singers, 50 children, and an organ, was built at the west end.

A massive pulpit and reading desk were added in the nave. In 1892-3 the gallery was removed, and the organ re-sited to its present position. The font was moved to its current place under the tower, and a more graceful pulpit replaced that built 60 years before. The school moved elsewhere in the village and the north aisle door was blocked. A reredos, later removed, was placed behind the altar, and the screened off area at the western end of the north aisle was converted into a vestry.

Below you can take a tour of the church to envisage some of the key features as they were described by the late Reverend M. A. H. Lawrence, who was vicar at Enford 1965-1973

Starting from outside the church in the car park the church grounds are entered via the Lych Gate, which is also the parish war memorial which names those who made the supreme sacrifice and also of the sacrifice made by their families.

To the right of the path on the approach to the church, is the stump of an ancient stone cross. This is either a village or churchyard cross, and was known to be in its present position in 1007. It was originally three to four meters high, and is definitely pre Saxon.

Looking up to the tower can be seen the church clock. There is a first written reference to an annual payment for care and winding of a clock in the church in 1728. The clock had no face and probably only struck the hours. When the clock was repaired in 1846 a face was added. The earliest method of telling the time in churches was by using scratch stones; some of these can be seen outside on the east wall of the south aisle a couple of metres above the ground. Later a large sundial was set over the porch in the south wall of the nave, but this was destroyed by the fall of the spire in 1817.

Entering the building through the South Porch leads to a late Norman Doorway; both porch and doorway have been restored using the original stones, after the fall of the spire. One problem however was that the Water Stoup was set in the wall upside down!!!

To the right as you enter the main church is the Organ which was made by J. S. Eagle of Hackney Road, London in 1859. It was originally a barrel organ, situated in the gallery, and common to most village churches of the time. You can still see the pumping handle at the back. It was subsequently converted to an electric pump.

The Pulpit dates from the late 19th Century.

Turning into the choir between the nave and the chancel one should note the Recess (or wall cupboard) on the south wall of the nave, behind the choir stalls. This dates from the time when the chancel itself was very small, perhaps only a rounded apse. Its chamfered edges, instead of the usual rebates, indicate that it is older than the other three recesses in the church. This also suggests that it was not an aumbry (a locked cupboard for holy vessels), and may well have been used as a credence table (where communion vessels are set while being prepared).

Before entering the Chancel, and looking up can be seen the Arch which is late Norman, possibly 1180-1200. The arch is pointed, halfway between the rounded early Norman style and the more sharply pointed Early English, and is supported on attached shafts with carved 'trumpet' capitals. On the nook-shafts (the columns set back in an angle of the wall), the capitals on the two sides are not identical. Those on the south (organ side) are of the trumpet variety and show within the mouth a pineapple, a spray of leaves, a growing plant, and an inverted oak leaf.

Above the arch is the Coat of Arms of King William IV dating from 1831. Royal coats of arms were much in vogue in this period to display the parish's loyalty and to add colour to the church. It measures about 1.5 metres square, and shows the arms of William IV supported by the lion and unicorn, encircled with the garter, and surmounted by a crown on an ermine cushion. The arms include an inescutcheon (smaller shield in the middle) showing the arms of Hanover, made up of the arms of Brunswick, Luneburg and Saxony, and surmounted with the crown of Hanover. This has its own smaller inescutcheon bearing the crown of Charlemagne the Great, which the Hanoverian Royal House bore as Arch Treasurers of the Holy Roman Empire. The coat of arms was originally flanked by two tablets (the Creed and the Commandments - as seen in the Avon valley in Milston and Bulford churches), but these have since been lost.

On the left of the church arch is a squint, which also formed a recess to house the piscine. This opening cut through the wall enabled the server with the Sanctus bell to follow the progress of the mass at the main altar. The Enford squint is exceptional in that it runs north to south instead of eastwards, and narrows from one metre to 20 centimetres.

Of note as you enter the chancel is the tablet on the south east corner. This commemorates the death of Abraham Poore of Longstreet in 1767. He was a descendant of Bishop Poore of Salisbury (1217-1228) and founder of the present Cathedral. Abraham was married to Ann, daughter of John Herne of Netheravon. The arms of both families are represented, the Poore being an ermine chevron between three herons (the old word for heron is 'herne'). Ann died in 1759, and an inscribed floor shows that they are both buried under the altar. This is simple in keeping with the whole chancel, notably for the almost austere lack of decoration, but beautiful in its simplicity.

To the left of the altar rail is the door to one of the treasures of this church: the Sacristy. This octagonal construction, with an ancient timber beam roof, is a place for prayer and small meetings. It was enhanced in 1995 with a wooden seat and table.

Returning into the nave, study the windows, none of which contains stained glass, thus allowing their shape and form to stand out, and more light to enter the church. On one of the windowsills in the north aisle you will see the Baskerville monument, a small stone effigy of a kneeling lady, in memory of Mrs. Jennifer Baskerville who died in 1615; the window above is thus known as the Baskerville window.

Turning into the North Aisle, you see the Lady Chapel altar, which dates from 1903 when the pews, placed there after the school ceased to operate in the church, were turned to face east rather than south. Also in this aisle is the Funeral Bier, purchased by local subscription about 1900.

The Vestry is formed from two wooden screens built across the space between the north-east tower support and the walls.

Under the tower is the Font whose exact age is unknown, but thought to be 15th century with an ornate 17th century oak cover. In the tower above are the Bells, four of which, and the Sanctus bell, date from 1553, with a fifth added in 1619. All were recast by John Taylor of Loughborough in 1913 when a sixth, treble bell was added. At this date a new wooden framework, headstocks and bearings were installed, and a ringing chamber was sited just below the bells; previously they had been rung from ground level.

Turning to look down the nave to the chancel you will notice the 'crooked' effect with the altar left of centre. This is thought to be a deliberate representation of Christ hanging on the cross with his head to one side. You will also be able to see and appreciate the skill and love that has gone into the making of All Saints Church, Enford over 1000 years.