



Mere

Guide to St. Michael the Archangel Church

The original church in Saxon times was probably one of the first substantial buildings in Mere, it was approximately 14ft across and 37½ft high.

The Church was rebuilt by the Normans on 1090's; the revenue from the church was given by William the Conqueror to his nephew Bishop Osmund.

Around 1200 the church was derelict for some years following a fire, it was re-built, with additions, until between 1449 and 1463 when it was re-modelled to something like it is now. In Historic Church circles it is considered one of the finest High Gothic examples in the country.

The oak pews were made by Walter the joiner of Maiden Bradley in 1640 and cost £86, 11 shillings and 10 pence. They were originally taller and were reduced in height around 1850.

Looking up, the carved wooden angels in the ceiling date to the 15 century, restored over the years.

The stained glass windows are very fine and some date to medieval times, the large window behind the altar dates from the early 20th century.

On the plain glass window behind the font are engravings depicting past rectors with their names and dates, carried out in 1981 by John Finnie celebrating the induction of Rev. Ben Elliot.

The carved oak parclose screen enclosing the chancel and the choir stalls is fifteenth century. The screen to the south chapel appears to be older but must have been installed at that time.

Under the rear choir stalls on both sides are carved misericords representing a green man, various flowers and angels (one playing a lute), the ones on the south side are fifteenth century the others are later copies. The curved projections under the seats are so the choir could "perch" during long sermons and still appear to be standing up.

In the south chapel are two tombs with brass covers, the central one is of Sir John Betteshorne, Lord of Chadenwych buried in 1398, he owned large areas of land in Wiltshire, Dorset and Hampshire. To the right of the altar is his son in law Sir John Berkeley buried around 1430. The fifteenth century stone and marble tomb (with part of the screen fitted over it), is the tomb of Lord Stourton. Facing the tomb if you look up you will see a gargoyle in an unusual pose! Going back into the main church and looking back at the chapel interior wall you will see evidence of a roof line from earlier times.

The pipe organ requires expensive repair but is an impressive feature and still played occasionally, at some time there was a gallery under the tower for a choir or musicians and possibly an organ.

The screen to the base of the tower was built by Waltons cabinet makers in 1946.

The tower contains three floors, the ringing room, the clock room and the bell chamber. The tenor bell weighs 23cwt and is tuned to D, this was cast in Frome. The oldest bell is the seven which dates to 1460. The metal bell frame was built locally in 1911 to replace the wooden frame,

Please enjoy our beautiful church.

There is a more detailed guide to the church in the blue folder on the table by the north door.

Source: Church of St. Michael the Archangel