



Sutton Veny St. John the Evangelist Church History

This fine mid Victorian building, dedicated on 1866, is the work of the noted architect of the time J L Pearson (1817-1897). He designed St. John's on the same plan as the old church of St. Leonard (see overleaf). It is cruciform with a central tower but additionally, unlike St. Leonards, has a graceful, 160 foot high spire, a landmark in the Wylie valley.

St. John's has been built in the Early English style using stone from quarries in nearly Frome, Somerset, and ground-stone dressings from Box in the north east of Wiltshire. The authoritative author of the well known and respected work "Buildings of England" Professor Pevsner, in the chapter on Wiltshire, describes this church as "impressive" as indeed we think you will agree it is.

There are a number of elements worthy of note as follows:

1. The noble proportions of the building as a whole. The rib vaulting in stone of the chancel and crossing under the tower are particularly fine.
2. The stained glass windows, all from the Victorian era – especially beautiful are the east window and the Rose Window in the north transept (illustrating the Benedicite) has echoes of Chartres or Notre Dame.
3. The carved oak lectern. This was displayed in the Great Exhibition of 1862 in the Crystal Palace in London by its makers Cox and Co. of London.
4. The reredos of Caen stone bears a representation of the Last Supper.
5. We have six bells which all came from the old church and date from 1641 to 1723. They were rehung on an iron frame in the tower in 1927. At the time of writing, 2005, they are used regularly by a team of bell ringers on special occasions.
6. The fine organ, by Gray and Davidson of London, with its 1000 pipes in 22 ranks – the front decorated built into its own integral loft.
7. The ANZAC Chapel in the south transept commemorating the sacrifice of the forces from the two nations of Australia and New Zealand in the First World War. Graves of 143 soldiers and 3 nurses of the Australian Forces, cared for beautifully by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, lie in the south west corner of the churchyard. Most of those buried here sadly died, following the end of the Great War, from the devastating influenza epidemic that swept the land in 1919.

We hope you have enjoyed your visit to this church. If you wish to know more there is a 24 page Illustrated booklet available from one of the church wardens: John Winther, Manymean's Mead, High Street, Sutton Veny, Warminster BA12 7AW, 'phone 01985 xxxxx. This more comprehensive description of St. John's costs £5 inc p & p and was written in 1993 by an eminent former resident of the village, Brigadier John Platt.

Perhaps before leaving you might like a quiet period for reflection and prayer, remembering all those who have and continue to worship here and care for this fine church.

You could, if you wish, use our Team Prayer which is as follows:

O Lord open our eyes to your presence, open our minds to your
grace, open our lips to your praise, open our hearts to your love, open
our lives to your healing – and be found among us. Amen.

May God be with you as you travel on elsewhere.

Source: Sutton St. John the Evangelist 2005