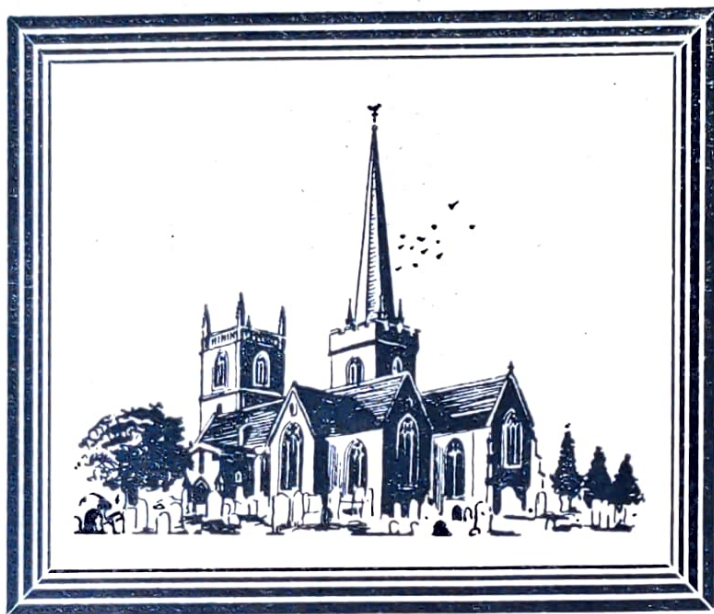


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The Church
of
ST. MARY • PURTON
WILTS.



ILLUSTRATED GUIDE

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Church of St. Mary, Purton



PURTON CHURCH is the only one in the country with a central tower and spire, and a western tower. The former was built about 1325, the latter about 150 years later.

The nave dates from the XIIth century, and the arcade was rebuilt in the XVth, 3 ft. being added in height to the pillars. In the next century the central tower and spire, transepts and chancel were added; and not long after the Lady Chapel was built on. The western tower followed about 1475, to accommodate bells.

There was at least one Church on the site before the present one: stonework from this is incorporated in the existing building. See capital of E. respond of S. Nave Arcade.

It will be noted that the chancel is unusually long and is cut off from the nave by the arches of the crossing. The reason for this is that the chancel and sanctuary were used by the monks from Malmesbury Abbey, who had a Cell on the site of the present Purton House, while the nave was the parish church of the village. The High Altar would have been under the spire where the choirstalls now are.

x misprint for XIII or XIV ?



Photograph by H. R. Wightman

Purton Church; interior

THE CHURCH OF ST. MARY, PURTON

In the sanctuary it will be seen that the level of the floor has been raised to elevate the present High Altar, at the expense of making it impossible to sit in the sedilia on the South side.

WINDOWS

The tracery of the windows is mostly perpendicular, with two decorated ones; (see especially the flowing tracery of the E. window of the Lady Chapel). The stained glass is mostly modern, except for the S. window in the Lady Chapel and the top lights in the N. windows of the nave, which are made up of fragments of pre-Reformation glass.

WALL-PAINTINGS

There are numerous traces of early wall-paintings as well as a later one superimposed upon an early painting above the S. door; while the most perfect example is on the S. wall of the Lady Chapel, which depicts the Death of the Virgin, with Our Lord and His apostles standing round. A subsequent enlargement of the window has broken into it.

The late Professor E. W. Tristram did some work on this painting to bring it more into prominence, and copied it in colour as a permanent record, in case it faded again.



Photograph by H. R. Wightman

Purton Church from the North-East

THE CHURCH OF ST. MARY, PURTON

THE FONT

An ancient stone bowl which was taken from the Church in 1817; and in 1907 was discovered in use as a horse trough in the paddock opposite the Manor, and restored to the Church, placed on a modern pedestal.

WOODWORK

All the woodwork is modern except the screen between the N. transept and the vestry, fragments at the back of the S. Priest's stall and on the front of the easternmost choir-stall on the S. side.

STATUES

Eleven stone niches were left empty after the destruction of the mid-sixteenth century. Of these seven have been filled; the two on the wall behind the Altar with statues of St. Nicholas (coupled with Our Lady in one document as Patron Saint of the Church), and St. Aldhelm (builder of Malmesbury Abbey, with which this Church was once intimately connected); one in the S. porch of the Madonna and Child; and three on the W. face of the tower—the Madonna and Child above, the two Archangels, St. Gabriel and St. Michael beneath. A copy of Donatello's St. George has been inserted above the War Memorial in the nave. The proportions of the niche have been spoilt by lowering the sill by three inches to accommodate it.

THE CHURCH OF ST. MARY, PURTON

The four oak figures in the reredos of the Lady Altar are St. Mary Magdalene, St. John the Evangelist, St. Joseph and St. Anne, the Mother of the Blessed Virgin.

The carving on the S.E. respond of the nave arcade represents the Annunciation, but has been badly weather-worn by being at one time placed outside.

THE BELLS

The West Tower contains a ring of six bells. The inscriptions are as follows:—

Treble. Gillett and Johnston, Croydon, 1924.

2. Jno. Grymes and William Packer, Churchwardens
Robt. Wells, Aldbourn fecit 1793.

3. Anno Domini 1628 Recast Gillett and Johnston,
Croydon 1924.

4. This bell was made in the yeare of our Lorde 1598.

5. Edward Dean, Humphrey Stanley, Churchwardens
* A.R. 1750.

A.M.D.G. et in piam memoriam Mervyn Stronge
Richardson, Captain, 1st Battalion Royal Welch
Fusiliers, killed in action at Fricourt, France,
March 19th, 1916, aged 21 years. Dulce et decorum
est pro patria mori. Recast MCMXVI

Capt. A. P. Richardson }
F. Kempster } Churchwardens

* A.R. i.e. A. Rudhall, bell-founder of Gloucester

THE CHURCH OF ST. MARY, PURTON

Tenor. I am called the Widow bell
And when they die to ring their knell
The Rev. Mr. Glasse, M.A., Vicar.
John Jefferis and Stephen Warman, Church-
wardens. A. Rudhall 1738.

The note of the Tenor is C sharp, a very low note for its weight of 20 cwt. and 16 lbs.

PRIEST'S ROOM

Above the S. porch there is a Priest's Room with carved stone fireplace, and a wash-basin with drain at the head of the spiral staircase. At some time another storey was added over the porch, but was demolished in the restoration of 1872.

THE VESTRY

The Vestry was walled up and out of use for many years, possibly centuries. Whether or not this had any connection with the fact that the bones of a woman were discovered in the cavity of the window between the vestry and the chancel, will probably never be known. At the restoration of 1872 the west doorway of the Vestry was cleared and the walling replaced with a screen made of some of the wood from the furnishing of the church, and in 1935 the small door leading to the sanctuary was re-opened, and furnished with an oak door, using the original hinge-pins and bolt-holes.

THE CHURCH OF ST. MARY, PURTON

In the Vestry are the Registers dating back to 1558, and from that time virtually complete, except for a few missing pages, and some illegible through damp.

A Chalice and Paten of the date of 1666 and bearing the inscription "John Gillam and William Shurmer Churchwarddens of Purton 1666" remains in the possession of the Church.

THE VICARS OF PURTON

1299	John de Hauteford	1582	Robert Price
1313	John de Haydoy	1601	James Hemerford
1316	Richard de Bristol	1629	William Alford
1349	Robert de Littleton	1664	William Bathe
1349	Nicholas Waas	1715	Richard Glasse
1384	John Bromflete	1725	Richard Glasse
1389	Robert Denly	1748	Nathaniel Sandford
1389	John Smith	1762	Gregory Sharpe
1409	John Burnet	1771	John Prower
1409	Henry Pyke	1828	John Mervyn Prower
1444	John Lyneham	1869	Walter Mitchell
1478	John Frankeleyn	1874	James Hewlett
1515	William Fauntleroy	1878	John Veysey
1535	David Walker	1917	Robert Birch
1547	Richard Gabel		Harrison
1555	Thomas Roberts	1927	Norman Steward
1570	John Prendergast		Willis
1573	William Simons		

THE CHURCH OF ST. MARY, PURTON

MEMORIALS

The only memorial of general interest is that of Nevil Maskelyne, the Astronomer Royal, who died in 1811. This will be found above the Altar in the S. transept, which also contains two other memorials of the same family.

SCRATCH-DIALS

Three of these will be seen on the exterior of the S. walls of the transept and Lady Chapel: these were in some way to indicate the time of Mass. There are two sundials—one on the S.W. buttress of the tower, and one on the gable of the S. porch.

THE CHURCHYARD

This contains the remains of an old Preaching-cross, but only a few stones of each course are still there, which have been set in concrete to demonstrate the original formation of the cross.

The Lych-gate is modern.

THE VILLAGE

Obviously at one time the village was situated near the Church, Purton House and Purton Manor. But at some period (possibly it was destroyed by fire or abandoned in some epidemic, as has happened elsewhere) it was rebuilt on the Oxford-Bristol coach road; which now, where it runs through the village, is named Cricklade Road, Station Road, High Street and Pavenhill, from which it traverses Braden Forest to Malmesbury.