

# Droxford Church Enigmas

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## Church Enigmas

### The West Doorway

The Victoria County History of 1908 states that the stonework of the west doorway, the plaque bearing the date 1599, and some other stonework nearby is 'modern'. It is possible that this stonework was installed during the extensive restoration of the church by Canon John Vaughan in 1903, and is stylistically correct for a late Tudor tower. There is no record of the doorway that preceded the present construction, or whether the plaque replaced an earlier one with the same date.

The only previous record of the doorway is from 1789, when the Vestry recorded that a new organ was installed. *Memorabilia* note that 'It stood at the West end, on the floor. There was no entrance then to the Church through the Belfry. The West entrance was made at this time.' The last sentence of this reference suggests that there was no west doorway until 1789. Inspection of the stonework tends to support this view:

- the sides of the doorway are splayed, which is more usual for windows, and there are no proper rebates for mounting the doors;
- a few feet above the floor on either side are triangular ledges, which may be the remains of a cill that was removed when a window was converted into the west doorway;
- at the doorway itself the present floor of the tower stands about a foot above an earlier floor, and may have been raised to provide an acceptable transition of levels between the interior and the exterior when the doorway was constructed.

### South Aisle Quoins

#### Chancel Arch

#### Chancel Window Segments

#### The Side Chapels

All histories of the church, including the *Victoria County History* and *Pevsner*, indicate that the north and south arches of the chancel are of the same date as the arches on the same sides in the nave. This is a reasonable assumption, since they are stylistically similar, although of somewhat different proportions. If this is the case, the north arch of the chancel would appear to date from the late 12<sup>th</sup> century, and the south arch from the early 13<sup>th</sup> century. The presence of arches would also assume the existence of side chapels of these dates.

The structure of the present side chapels cannot be used to support this hypothesis, since by their window tracery they clearly date from about a century later. An alternative hypothesis is that the north and south arches of the chancel are contemporary with the structure of the present side chapels, from the late 13<sup>th</sup> or early 14<sup>th</sup> centuries, but copied the architectural

style of the existing nave arcades on their respective sides. This hypothesis may be supported by the fact that the carved heads supporting the south arch are reputedly dated by style to the 14<sup>th</sup> century. If this were the case, it is possible that there were no side chapels until the late 13<sup>th</sup> or early 14<sup>th</sup> centuries, or that chapels existed which were not linked to the chancel by a major archway.

What is the date of the nave roof?

Was there ever a clerestory in the nave?

How and when was the tower constructed? – The west doorway has a plaque with the date 1599. It is likely that this date relates to the building of the tower at that time or the rebuilding of a steeple mentioned in church records earlier in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. There is no record of when the earlier steeple was constructed, but it is likely that it was extended or replaced in 1599 to accommodate the mechanisms for full circle bell ringing.

### Porch

### Buttresses

### Apse

A number of local histories suggest that the original Norman church possessed an apse. There appears to be no material or historic evidence to support this.

### Graffiti

### Wall Paintings

### The Font

There appears to be no material or historic evidence concerning the nature and the location of the font through most of the history of the church.

The earliest mention of a font is in 1873, when it recorded that it was moved from the east to the west end of the north aisle, to accommodate a new organ that was to be located at the east end.

On July 21<sup>st</sup> 1903 the minutes of the Droxford Church Improvement Committee noted that 'the font had been shifted to the north-west corner, thereby enabling the north door to be opened', suggesting that in 1873 the font had been moved in front of the north door, blocking this entrance.

In 1908 the *Victoria County History* indicated the font was 'modern', suggesting that the one moved in 1873 had been replaced at some time.

### Chancel Clerestory Windows

