

# **Droxford Church Architectural points of interest**

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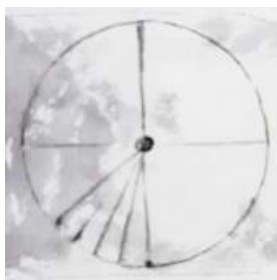


The arch from the Lady Chapel into the chancel rests on two carved heads, which probably date from the late 14<sup>th</sup> century. Their identity is unknown, but they may represent some local personalities from the period.



Also from the late 14<sup>th</sup> century is the ogee-shaped niche to the left of the altar in the Lady Chapel. This would originally have contained a statue, probably of the Virgin Mary, which would have been removed at the Reformation or by the Puritans. Its canopy is decorated with roses and miniature vaulting.

The south and east walls of the north chapel display the remnants of an extensive area of wall painting, with floral sprays set in a masonry pattern. There are also traces of medieval paint on a niche in the Lady Chapel, and on the stonework of the south arcade, which has the faded remains of a pattern of intertwined red roses.



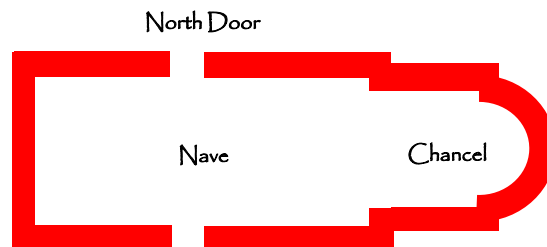
There are four medieval mass dials on the exterior of the church, two on the jambs of the south doorway, and two on the south wall of the Lady Chapel. These would have been used to indicate the times of services.

## The Norman & Medieval Church

The earliest features of the present church that can be dated with some confidence are the zig-zag carvings on the chancel arch, and the north and south doorways, which are thought to be from about 1150.



These may have formed part of a simple two-cell building, possibly with a semi-circular apse at the eastern end.

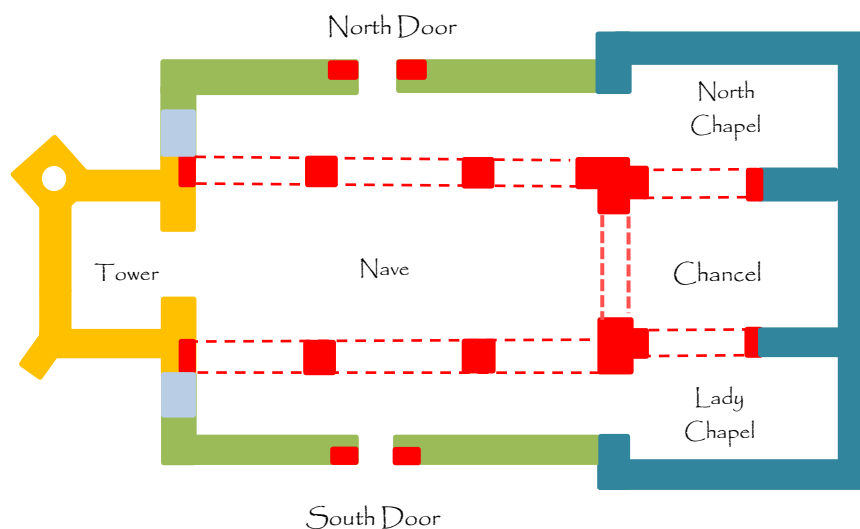


Thomas Bilson, who became rector in 1583, was also Warden of Winchester College, and was appointed Bishop of Worcester in 1596, and Bishop of Winchester the following year. After the death of Elizabeth I he became spiritual adviser to James I, and preached the sermon at his coronation on 25<sup>th</sup> July 1603. He was a leading member of the team that compiled the King James Bible, and himself wrote its dedication to the king. Thomas Bilson is buried in Westminster Abbey, where he lies between the tombs of Edward III and Richard II.



It is thought that the plaque above the west door showing the date AD1599 refers to the construction of the present tower, with its square stair turret set diagonally in the north-west corner. An inventory of church goods made on 15<sup>th</sup> July 1552 included 'Foure belles in the Steple', indicating that an earlier structure had existed here. The brick battlements were added later, and some of the stonework around the west door may be more recent.

The tower originally contained four bells – a treble of 1606, a second from 1631, and a third and tenor from 1672. A fifth bell, from St Margaret's Church, Canterbury and dated 1625, was added in 1969. The tower is fitted with a gilded clock from 1861, and surmounted by a gilded weather-vane.





The only furnishings remaining from this period are the Jacobean oak altar rails in the chancel, which are supported by carved posts, and have balusters with turned shafts.

### The Hanoverian & Georgian Church

Dr Lewis Stephens was rector from 1722 to 1745. His monument is a circular tablet let into the south wall of the Lady Chapel.



He may have built the Old Rectory, which is now a private house, and he bequeathed a chest of old books ‘to the Parish Church of Droxford to remain there for ever in a press made at my expense for that purpose to and for the use of the Curate of Droxford whenever the Rector of the Parish aforesaid does not reside in person’. These books formed the basis of the Parish Library, which is now held in the library of the University of Southampton.



Dr James Chelsum, who was rector from 1782 to 1801, is reported to have been rather a pugnacious gentleman, who was not always ‘persona grata’ with his parishioners.

On 15<sup>th</sup> July 1783 his Vestry agreed ‘... that whereas great offence has recently been given to well disposed Persons by the profaning of the Sabbath by persons openly playing at different Sports on the Sabbath-day, in opposition to the established Laws of the Land, proper extracts of the Laws in force against persons absenting themselves from public worship & profaning the Lord’s day, be transcribed and affixed to the Church Doors, signed by the principal Parishioners; they declaring at the same time their resolution to correct and suppress such abuses & profanations.’



The gilded clock on the tower dates from 1861. The brass eagle lectern was the gift of Mr Richard Redfearn Goodlad of Hill Place, in memory of his wife who died in 1867.

The pulpit is a Victorian copy of a 15<sup>th</sup> century design, and was given to St Mary & All Saints in 1882 by the congregation of St Matthew's, Denmark Hill, where the Reverend Stephen Bridge had previously been minister, when they acquired a new one.



Stephen Bridge was rector of Droxford from 1868 to 1886. He is reported to have been an Evangelical churchman who liked services to be decently and reverently conducted, and was jealous for the appearance of the Church. There is a brass memorial to him on the south wall of the Lady Chapel, and the east window of the Lady Chapel is a memorial both to himself and his wife Margaret.

Other 19<sup>th</sup> century furnishings include a pair of Glastonbury chairs, a Camelot chair, and a Cambridge chair with litany desk.

An early photograph shows the church as it would have been during the latter part of the Victorian period. It has religious inscriptions on the stonework, and on the panelling behind the altar. The pulpit is located under the chancel arch rather than in its present position to the north side. The rood loft access has been covered with plaster, and there are more rows of pews than there are today.





It is thought that the south chapel or Lady Chapel was originally built end of the 12th century or the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, and enlarged at the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century or the beginning of the 14<sup>th</sup> century.

It contains the recumbent Purbeck marble figure of a woman dating from the same period, which is thought to be part of an altar tomb installed by John de Drokenesford in memory of his mother.

