

St Mary & All Saints, Droxford A Village Church

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A Village Church

Introduction

St Wilfrid may have established a religious foundation at Droxford during his mission to the Meon Valley in the period 681 to 686, but the name of the village was not recorded until the year 826, when 20 hides of land at 'Drocenesford' were granted in a charter by King Egbert to the Old Monastery at Winchester.

The Domesday Book of 1086 described 'Drocheneford' as being held by the Bishop of Winchester for the benefit of his monks, and having at that time a church valued at 20s, but no evidence has yet been found of an Anglo-Saxon building on the site of the present church, or elsewhere in the village.

Our knowledge of the Norman and medieval church at Droxford is largely based upon interpretation of its early stone fabric, much of which still exists, and those early features that survived the Reformation and the attention of the Puritans.

Since the 16th century the elements of a written history have evolved, much of it based upon records of the Vestry, and informal memorabilia. This provides a strong link to many of the generations who have frequented the church in the past, and illustrates how they have used and modified the building and its contents to meet both local needs, and the wider theological and social demands of their own particular times.

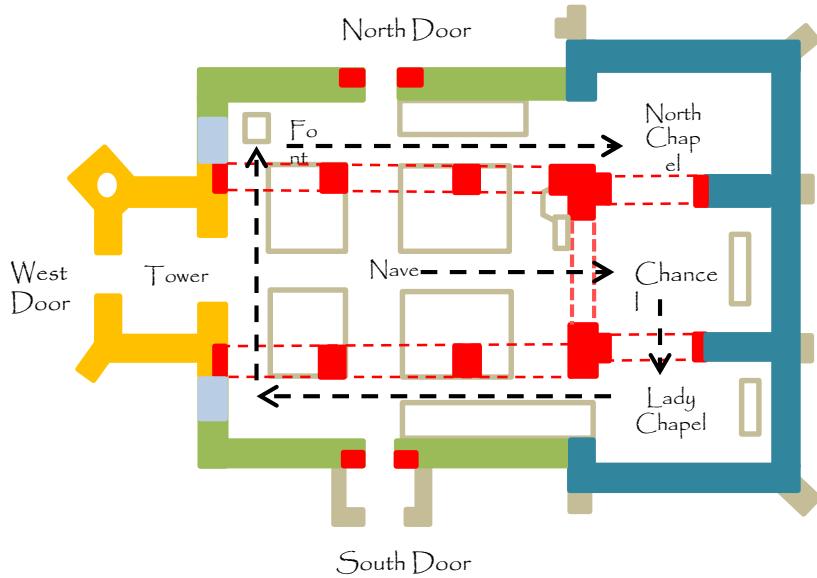
A plan of the church as it now stands is shown overleaf, with a key showing the likely dates of the main stonework. This guide follows the route shown by the arrows, starting in the nave.

To complete the guide there is a description of a short walk starting from the church, which visits a number of sites of local and wider interest.

A list of all known rectors of Droxford is included at the end.

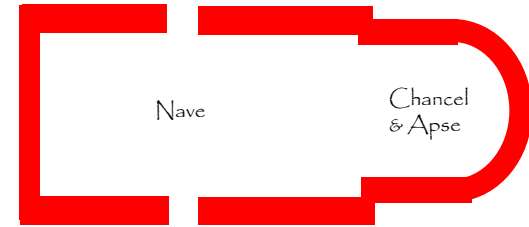
The Nave

The nave retains much fabric from the Norman church, dating from about 1150. The substantial walls of the nave and chancel are thought to have formed part of a simple two-cell building, possibly with a semi-circular apse at the eastern end.



- Mid 12th century
- Late 12th or early 13th centuries
- Late 13th or early 14th centuries
- Late 15th or early 16th centuries
- Late 16th century

North Door



South Door



The imposing chancel arch, with its zig-zag carvings, stands in its original position, but was raised by about four feet in the 19th century.

Pointed arches were cut into the walls at the end of the 12th century and the beginning of the 13th century to open into side aisles and side chapels.





Above the pulpit is the upper opening from a narrow staircase, which would have given access to a medieval rood loft running across the top of the chancel arch, and carrying a representation of Christ on the cross, with his mother on one side, and St John on the other.

Faint traces of a pattern of intertwined red roses can be seen in places on the south arcade. Wall paintings would probably have covered much of the church in medieval times, until they were removed during the Reformation in the 16th century.



The furnishings of the nave largely date from the Victorian period. In 1847 galleries that had been erected at the east and west ends of the nave during the 18th century were taken down. At the same time Georgian box pews were removed, ‘much ancient oak being cast out and sold’, and the church was completely re-fitted with pine pews which completely filled the nave, side aisles, and Lady Chapel, with seating for congregations of up to 300. Many of these pews remain in the church today.

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, a Victorian copy of a 15th century design, was given to St Mary & All Saints in 1882 by the congregation of St Matthew’s, Denmark Hill, where the Reverend Stephen Bridge, rector of Droxford from 1868 to 1886, had previously been the minister.

Stephen Bridge 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.



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

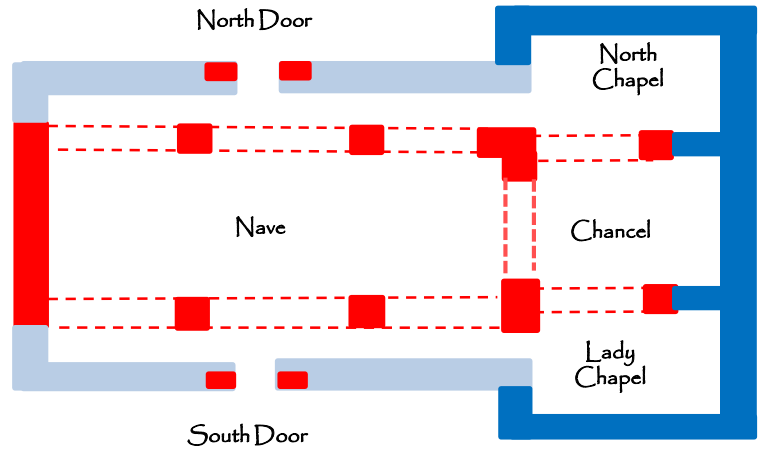


A major restoration programme was carried out in the church by Canon John Vaughan, rector from 1902 to 1910. The number of pews was reduced, and the pulpit moved to its present position. The inscriptions were removed from the stonework, and the rood loft access uncovered. After this restoration the nave appeared much as it does today, although a few more rows of pews have been removed since then.



The Chancel

The chancel probably reached its present form in the late 13th or early 14th centuries, when the apse would have been removed, and the chapels were enlarged to their present size.



Stone segments of the earliest windows of the church can be seen above the arch in the wall between the chancel and the Lady Chapel.



The altar rails are Jacobean. The oak panelling of the sanctuary is in the Jacobean style, but from the early 20th century.

The stone tracery of the east window of the chancel is in the Perpendicular style, probably dating from the late 15th or early 16th centuries.



The stained glass in the east window of the chancel is a memorial to members of the Hulbert family, installed after the previous window was damaged during the Second World War, and shows the Nativity, with below it the Annunciation



It was designed by Christopher Webb, a leading designer of stained glass during the first half of the 20th century

A brass wall memorial in the sanctuary is dedicated to the Rev. James Adair Griffith Colpoys, rector from 1831 to 1868. His first wife was Anne Sumner, daughter of John Bird Sumner, who later became Archbishop of Canterbury.



The Lady Chapel

It is thought that the south chapel or Lady Chapel was originally built at the end of the 12th century or the beginning of the 13th century, and enlarged to its present size at the end of the 13th century or the beginning of the 14th century.



It contains the Purbeck marble figure of a woman, which is thought to be part of an altar tomb installed by John de Drokenesford early in the 14th century in memory of his mother. He was the son of a local squire, and at times Rector of Droxford, Keeper of the King's Wardrobe to Edward I, Chancellor of the Exchequer to Edward II, a chaplain to the Pope, and Bishop of Bath & Wells. The marble figure was probably removed at the time of the Puritans, but recovered from a nearby field early in the 19th century.



The reredos behind the altar was given by her family in memory of Hannah Talbot-Ponsonby, and is dated 6th January 1952. It shows the *Agnus Dei* in the centre, with lilies symbolic of the Virgin Mary on the right, and the Sacred Monogram IHC on the left.



The original altar of the Lady Chapel would have been made of stone. The present oak altar table has five consecration crosses engraved on its top surface.

To the right of the altar is an early medieval piscina, used for washing communion vessels.



To the left of the altar is a late 14th century niche. This would originally have contained a statue, probably of the Virgin Mary, which would have been removed at the time of Reformation in the 16th century. Its ogee-shaped canopy is decorated with roses and miniature vaulting.



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



The two south windows of the Lady Chapel, installed in 1903, are by Clayton & Bell. In the left hand window the risen Christ appears to St Peter, and in the right hand window to Mary Magdalene.



The east window of the Lady Chapel, installed in 1938, is a memorial to the Reverend Stephen Bridge and his wife, Margaret. The Virgin & Child are depicted at its centre, surrounded in the four corners by St Francis, St Wilfrid, St George, and St Stephen.



In the lower right hand corner the initials of Stephen Bridge are depicted either side of a bridge across a river. The window was designed by Martin Travers, who was at the time chief instructor in stained glass at the Royal College of Art.



There is also a brass memorial to Stephen Bridge on the south wall, above which is a circular tablet in memory of Doctor Lewis Stephens, who was rector from 1722 to 1746.



Dr Stephens may have built or re-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.

Amongst a number of other memorials in the Lady Chapel, a stone plaque is dedicated to Neville Lovett, first Bishop of Portsmouth from 1927 to 1936, who retired to Droxford in 1946.



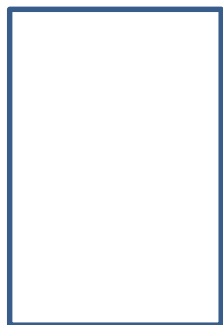
A simple stone tablet in the floor is in memory of Alexander Shearer, who was baptised at Droxford on 10th April 1840, and died the following year.



The South Aisle

The aisles of the church were widened during the Tudor period late in the 15th or early in the 16th centuries.

The south aisle contains a number of memorials. A light brown marble slab in the floor marks the grave of Nicholas Preston, who became rector of Droxford in 1642, at the start of the Civil War. 1650 he was replaced by an Independent minister, Mr Robert Webb, who was reputedly a good scholar and an eminent preacher.



At the restoration of the monarchy in 1660 under Charles II, Nicholas Preston returned and 'thrust out Mr Webb and his family with their goods in a rough and violent manner'. Mr Webb and his family were taken in by the kindness of a local gentleman, who happened to be a papist.



Among the monuments on the wall of the south aisle is an impressive white marble memorial in memory of Richard Goodlad of Hill Place, and his second wife Frances.

Mr Goodlad was a rather authoritarian magistrate, described by William Cobbett in his 'Rural Rides' as 'a cock Justice of the Peace'. In 1815 he sentenced eight boys and four girls between the ages of 11 and 15 to a month in prison for being rogues and vagabonds, and begging from door-to-door. He was Deputy Lieutenant of Hampshire in 1803, and Sheriff in 1818.



The neo-Jacobean oak screen was designed in 1935 by the eminent architect Sir Charles Nicholson, at the time when he was working on the designs for Portsmouth Cathedral. It was originally located at the entrance to the north chapel by the bequest of Laura Annie Williams, who died on 26th January 1935, and had been organist of Droxford church for over 40 years.

The single-mullion window in the west wall of the south aisle, is dedicated to Isaac Westbrook, a painter and glazier of Droxford who died in 1868, and his wife Elizabeth who died in 1907. It depicts the Virgin Mary on the left, with a text from the *Magnificat*, and Simeon on the right with a text from the *Nunc Dimittis*.



It was made in 1909 in the studios founded by Charles Eamer Kempe. It has his company signature, a wheatsheaf, in the bottom right hand corner of the left hand light, superimposed with the black tower of his heir, Walter Tower.

The year 2000 millennium window in the children's corner was designed by Vanessa Cutler, and shows Noah's Ark in the Flood.



The North Aisle



The font in the north-west corner is from the 20th century, but copied from a Norman design. Its wooden lid, added later and inscribed with the date 1980, is decorated with an ornate wrought iron cross.

A number of members of the Morley family, who lived at the Manor House, are commemorated by impressive 17th and 18th century wall memorials near the font. A large marble cartouche with carved scrolls is dedicated to Francis Morley, who died in 1690. It was probably made in the workshops of Edward Pierce, a mason sometimes employed by Sir Christopher Wren.



A rectangular marble tablet nearby is in memory of Sir Charles Morley, the elder son of Francis Morley, and his wife Lady Magdalen Morley. Their son Charles, who died in 1752, is commemorated by another white marble tablet, with a veined marble surround, supported on acanthus leaf brackets.



An oval slate tablet set into the pillar adjacent to the font has a Latin inscription which records that Francis, second son of the Rev. Francis Morley, himself the second son of Francis Morley Esq., died on 15th March 1690, having lived just eight months. He had been baptised in Winchester Cathedral on 5th August 1689.



In the west wall of the north aisle is a single-mullion window, dating from 1920. It shows St Nicholas on the left and St Christopher on the right, and was manufactured by James Powell & Sons. It was installed in memory of Captain Lancelot Napier Turton, Royal Navy, who was lost at sea in 1918, and buried at Aden.



Another single mullion window adjacent to the font was designed in 1982 by Carl Edwards of the Fulham Glass House. He also produced stained glass for Liverpool Cathedral, the House of Lords, and the Temple Church in London. It is dedicated to Alice and Henry Wigg, the wife and son of Major Robert Wigg. The window depicts scenes from the Creation. The hands of Christ support the sphere of the world, and hold the compass and scales. Heaven is symbolised by the stars in the background, and earth by the green segment in the circle. The doves represent the Spirit of God moving upon the face of the waters.



A leaping carp at the bottom of the window symbolises baptism.



The North Aisle (contd)

Those from Droxford who died in the 1914-1918 war are remembered by an alabaster tablet on a blue mosaic background, surmounted by a red mosaic pediment, to the left of the north door. It was manufactured by James Powell & Sons of the Whitefriars Glass works.



The North Chapel

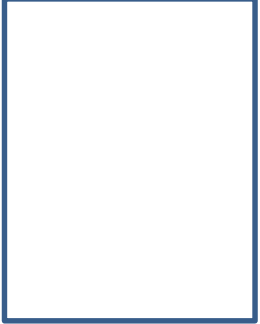


Like the Lady Chapel, the north chapel was originally dedicated to St Mary, since the will of Roger Bryklesworth, dated 26th April 1390, bequeathed 20 quarters of barley 'to the fabric of the two chancels of Our Lady adjoining the principal chancel on either side'. On the south wall of the chapel are a piscina and an aumbry, both dating from medieval times.

The south and east walls display the remnants of an extensive area of wall painting, with floral sprays set in a masonry pattern.

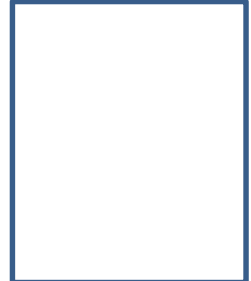


The windows in the north chapel and have stonework in the Decorated style, with cusped y-tracery, dating from the late 13th or early 14th centuries.



The black marble floor slab at the entrance to the north chapel in memory of Edward Searle, a local farmer who died in 1617, is the oldest dated memorial inside the church.

On the north wall is a stone tablet to Susanna Nourse, wife of Dr Peter Nourse, rector of Droxford from 1701 to 1722, Prebendary of Winchester Cathedral, and Chaplain in Ordinary to Queen Anne. It is possible that she is buried in one of the three coffins re-discovered in a vault beneath the north chapel in 1973



A rectangular white marble tablet with a dark grey frame, also in the north chapel, records that Mary Myngs and Elizabeth Nourse, daughters of Dr Peter Nourse and his wife Susanna, were also interred in the vault.

In the south-west corner of the north chapel is a small oak door carved with meandering roses that covers the entrance to a narrow staircase that once leads to the rood loft access above the pulpit.



The glass screens enclosing the north chapel were installed in 2017 with a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

The Exterior

As you leave the church take note of the elaborate spiral, zigzag and chevron carvings on the Norman doorways, which were moved to the outer walls when the aisles were enlarged.



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 varied collection of roof lines gives a good indication of the additions and alterations made to the church. The churchyard contains many memorials from the last xxx x hundred years, some simple slabs, others more grand in form.

The tower, with its square stair turret set diagonally in the north-west corner, was added late in the Tudor period. Above the west door is a plaque showing the date AD1599, which is thought to refer to the main parts of the present structure, but an inventory of church goods made on 15th July 1552 included 'Foure belles in the Steple', which indicates that this replaced or added to an earlier construction of some sort.



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 Trail

Once you have explored the church, you might like to follow a short trail of about a mile that visits a number of interesting and historic locations nearby.

Starting at the south door of the church, the trail takes you down to the River Meon (1), where Isaak Walton would have fished after his daughter Anne married William Hawkins, who was rector from 1664 to 1691. You may be lucky enough to see the herons and kingfishers that frequent the water meadows.

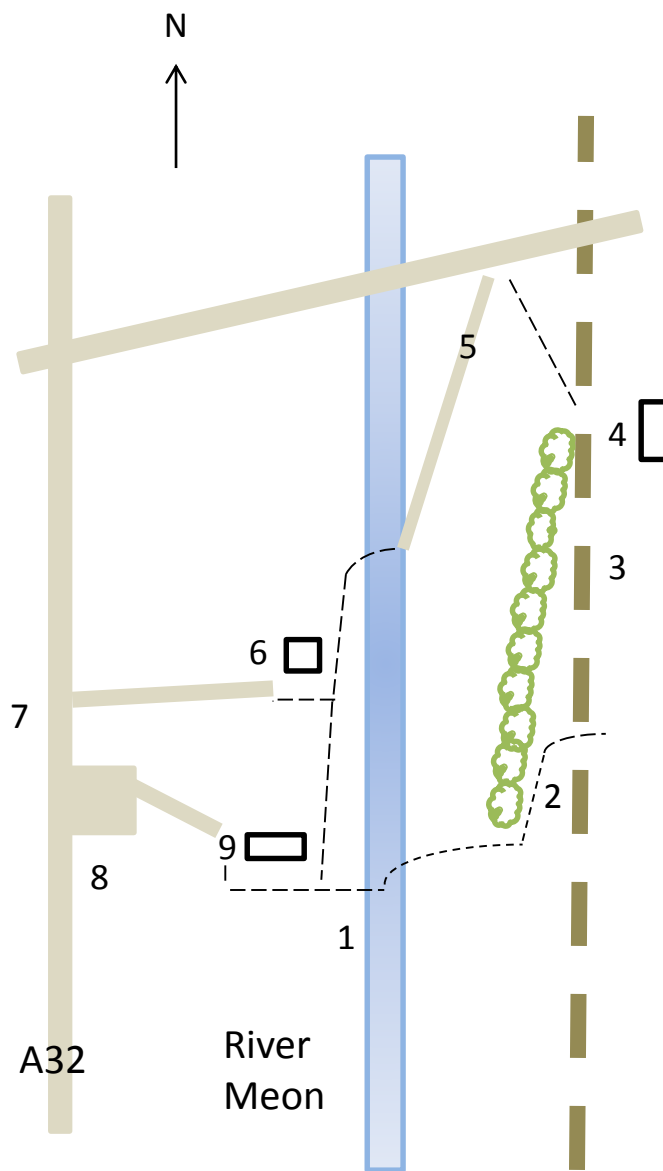
From the river the trail goes up a short slope to the disused Meon Valley railway line, which is a popular route for walkers, cyclists and riders. A display board (2) marks the spot where Winston Churchill and other allied leaders were based in a railway carriage in June 1944, to be close to General Eisenhower and other military leaders who were nearby at Southwick during the invasion of Normandy.

A short distance further along the railway you will pass through the site (3) of an Anglo-Saxon cemetery dating from 450 – 600, which contained up to 300 graves.

Passing the former Droxford Station, which is now a private residence (4), the trail drops down to Mill Lane (5), which brings you back through the water meadows to the village, passing close by the Mill (6), and some old timber-framed cottages.

Emerging from Mill Lane the houses on the main road (7) still give a good impression of what the village looked like in Georgian times. Back in the village square (8) you can glimpse the Manor House, and the Village Hall, which was originally built in 1835 as Droxford National School.

The path back to the church gives a good view of the church tower (9), mainly built in the Tudor period.



Rectors of Droxford

Peter Rusciniol, 1231
Peter de Abuzun, 1250
John de Berewik, 1280
Nicholas de Audeby, 1289-1308
John de Drokenesford, 1308-1310
Philip de Drokenesford, 1310-1315
Michael de Drokenesford, 1315
Richard de Hamptone, 1367-1374
John de Dounay 1374
Richard Gomfrey, 1375-1377
Roger Bryklesworth, 1377-1390
John de Swafham, 1390-1394
Willian Norton, 1394
Poggio de Florencia, 1423
Michael Cleue, 1477
David Persons, 1480
William Holden, 1485
William Cuffold, 1533-1558/9
John Willyams, 1559-1582/3
Thomas Bilson, 1583
John Harmer, 1596-1613
Christopher Hurst, 1613-1628
Richard Neile, 1628-1642
Nicholas Preston, 1642-1650

Robert Webb, 1650-1660
Nicholas Preston, 1660-1664
William Hawkins, 1664-1691
George Fulham, 1691-1700
Thomas Goodwin, 1700-1701
Peter Nourse, 1701-1722
Lewis Stephens, 1722-1746
James Cutler, 1746-1782
James Chelsum, 1782-1801
William Garnier, 1801-1831
J.A. Griffith Colpoys, 1831-1868
Stephen Bridge, 1868-1886
Robert Harrison, 1886-1902
John Vaughan, 1902-1910
Jacob Stephenson, 1910-1926
Leonard Etheridge, 1926-1946
Gerald Page, 1946-1964
Thomas Strangeways, 1965-1969
John Townsend, 1969-1974
John Beaumont, 1974-1987
David Henley, 1987-2003
Jim Foley, 2003-2009
Stuart Holt, 2009-2014
Tony Forrest, 2015 -