

ST. MARY & ALL SAINTS, DROXFORD (A GUIDE)

Author: Gordon Hope

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DOWN THE AGES

As you crossed the village square, you were at the heart of any medieval village, for to the left is the ancient Manor House and its farm; to the right the Rectory House (until it became lay property) and ahead of you, the Church. Around these three revolved, in former times, all village life.

This quiet valley of the Meon has a history reaching back into the depth of time. In the 5th Century, the Angles from Jutland - the Jutes - invaded this valley and established a fishing settlement - at Warnford.

The Saxons followed them; in 494 they came from near the Rhine and landed in Hampshire, and so it is believed that here may have existed, once upon a time, a wooden Saxon church.

After entering the Church pause - sit if you will - and surveying the interior as a whole reflect of those men, of so long ago, who raised this church to the glory of God; of those in whose keeping it has been for posterity; of those who received their baptism at the font, and walked its Nave to plight their troath in marriage; even of those whose mortal remains lie at peace within the shadow of its flint walls. And what a pagent in dress, over the many centuries, is conjured up before our eyes!

One subject which the historian and genealogist will observe is that, from memorials, the armigerous family of Morley were of some consequence at the Manor House during some two hundred years from 1552: the year before 'bloody' Mary ascended the throne. But a Great House, there never was in Droxford.

THE PLANTAGENT CHURCH

We, today, as members of the Church of England are apt to forget that over the centuries in this very church, and continuing to the year 1534, Masses were said in latin; in fact until King Henry VIII became Head of the Church of England.

Here, at the church door, the people would have witnessed such customs as Soul-Scot (commonly the gift of, the best beast, garment or chattel of a deceased person) being presented to the Priest.

THE NAVE & CHANCEL

These two, and these alone, formed the original church. Their approximate date is 1150 to 1160, when the earliest records commence during the reign of Henry Plantagenet.

No pews would you have seen: at the most there would have been a few forms (benches). People then lolled against the walls or pillars.

Our four massive PILLARS were formed out of the original walls, and in these walls were set the late NORMAN DOORWAYS (1), with their incised chevron design. The carving appears so regular, that without doubt it was executed with an axe, indicating that the mason was a Norman and not a Saxon, for the latter being by far the better builders used chisels on their stones.

CHANCEL ARCH

This stands where it was built originally, but it has been elevated some four feet at a later date. Note the two FALSE GARGOYLES of fish heads!

CHANCEL LIGHTS

These that you see are comparatively modern. Below them, in late medieval times there existed a window in the original north and south walls. The remains of the one in the south wall can still be traced.

THE SANCTUARY

The Communion Rails carved in English oak were executed in Jacobean times. The Altar Table is of the time of the Reformation. These were placed in the church by Dr. Nicholas Preston, rector, after his reinstatement in 1660. In 1903 the oak panelling was fixed to the walls, (on the south wall a panel can be opened to reveal a Piscina and shelf).

The EAST WINDOW, in the 12th Century wall, is an example of the 15th Century Mason's work. It was badly damaged by bomb blast during World War II, and when reinstated, the stained glass was donated by Lieutenant Colonel J. H. Hulbert, M.A., J.P., in memory of his parents, and of his brother, who was killed in action during the last war.

Turn right now into:-

THE LADY CHAPEL

As you pass through the arch, observe to your left a FALSE GARGOYLE of a man's head, with long cavalier hair. On your right is one of a medieval peasant (2), (who in life, very possibly heard the masses said here) he is grinning, and putting his tongue out! What humour did the masons of yore possess.

Here is recorded much local history. This Chapel and the SOUTH AISLE were built outside the Southern wall of the Plantagenet church, which was pierced during the 12th – 13th Centuries. Objects of interest are as follows:

- The adzed oak joists in the roof.
- CANOPIED NICHE (3) to the left of the altar. In 1903 it was discovered by Canon Vaughan, the rector. Badly desecrated by Puritan zealots it had been bricked and plastered up. It shows the rose charges of the armorial coat of William of Wykeham. The Niche no doubt contained a statue of the Virgin and Child.
- The RERDOS was donated, 'In memory of Hannah Talbot-Ponsonby 6th January, 1952. The gift of her family.'
- PISCINA (4) was discovered in the 1903 restoration.

- EFFIGY (5). This is of the lady of rank, her dress indicates its date to be of the 13th Century. Found about 1820, buried in an adjacent meadow it was brought into the Church again and laid behind the organ in the North Chapel. Since 1903 it has rested in its present position. Tradition has it that she might be the mother of John de Drokenesford, the son of the local squire, who was alive in the latter part of the 13th Century. This is borne out because in 1294 he was Keeper of the Wardrobe to Edward I, and became Lord Chancellor of England during the reign of Edward II. Thus, he was little in Droxford, but he was responsible for some church restoration, including the High Altar, where he erected an altar tomb in memory of his parents. None now remains: it was utterly destroyed by Cromwell's followers. When he died in 1329, he was Bishop of Bath and Wells. His tomb and his stall in the Cathedral of Wells both bear his coat of arms, 'quarterly or and azure three mitres counter changed.'
- The memorial STAINED glass is 19th Century.
- Several persons lie buried within this Chapel, but a multitude of feet over the generations, have defaced much memorial inscription. For posterity the following are recorded:
 1. 'HEARE LYETH THE BODY OF IAMES BETTES GENT WHO DIED THE 29th OF IVNE IN THE YEARE 1666'. Surmounted is his coat of arms:- Sable on a bend argent three cinquefoils gules.
 2. 'HERE LIETH THE BODIE OF HENRIE COLLINS GENT WHO DIED DECEMBER 19th 1679.' And along side him 'HERE LYETH INTERED THE BODY OF IANE COLLINS WIFE OF HENRY COLLINS WHO DEPARTED THIS LIFE THE 29th DAY OF MARCH ANNO DOMINI 1671.' Close to the wall is the burial of
 3. 'IOHN KING WHO WAS SERVANT TO YE HONOURABLE CHARLES MORLEY ESQ NINE YEARES DIED YE 24th OF IUNE 1689 IN THE 26th YEAR OF HIS AGE IN HOPE OF A IOYFUL RESURRECTION.' We shall see that the family of Morley were of some consequence in the parish.
 4. A diamond shaped stone inscribed 'A.H.B. SHEARER 1841'.
 5. And finally the last one whose letters have become obliterated completely.

We can be guided as to the date of the building of the LADY CHAPEL because in the will of Roger de Bryclesworthe, who was rector from 1377 to 1390, and died on May 11th of that year, he makes provision for two altars on either side of the High Altar in Droxford, both dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary - (the second one being in the North Chapel).

This Chapel, in the opinion of Canon J. Vaughan M.A. rector 1902 – 1910, contained without much doubt the stately tomb which was utterly destroyed by Cromwell's soldiers. Thus it was probably the family tomb and chapel of the de Drokenesfordes; Michael de Drokenesforde rector from 1322 to 1367 was a kinsman of John de Drokenesforde, a Bishop when he died in 1329.

SOUTH AISLE

Moving westwards from the Lady Chapel there are here in this aisle four graves: the last of particular interest.

- The first stone slab, so mutilated and worn, shows only arms displayed on a lozenge - indicating it to be of a lady. And all that can be read is 'HERE LIETH MARY ED'.
- Then there are two of slate, feet to feet, of wife and husband. Inscribed thus; 'HIC IN CHRISTO OBDORMIT CATHARINA REVd JACOBI CUTLER AM UXOR ET JOHANIS NEWY STP OLIM DECANI

CICEFTRENFIS FILIA OBIIT DEFIDERATIFSIMA 12 CALEND DECEMBR ANNO SALUTIS 1770 EXEUNTE AETATIS UINQUAGEFSIMO.' For the husband:

'SUBTUS JUXTA CINERES DILECTIFSIMAE CONJUGIS (COMMUNE HOC SEPULCHRUM PRAEOCCUPANO) DEPOSITUM EST CORPUS JACOBI CUTLER AM HUIUSCE ECCLESIAE PERSEX & TRIGINTA ANN RECTORIS OBIIT QUINDECIMO DIE MARTIUS A.D. 1782 AETATIS SEXAGFSIMO QUINTO UT THALAMI TUMULI COMES NEC MORTE REVELIS ET SOCIOS VITAE NECTAT UTERQ CINIS.'

– And finally this memorial to Dr. Preston (7) which tells us of the tribulations suffered during the Civil War and the anxious years under the Protectorate. His coat of arms 'Argent two bars gules within a bordure sable' impaling 'sable a chevron between three pheons or', for Foster, his wife, are superimposed with his crest, 'Out of a mural coronet or a demi fox rampart sable gorged with a collar ermine.'

'HERE LIES THE BODY OF NICHOLAS PRESTON DR. IN DIVINITY AND RECTOR OF THIS CHURCH INSTITUTED AND INDUCTED IN THE YEARE 1642 BY THE TYRANNY OF THE LATE VSARPERS FOR HIS EMINENT LOYALTY AND ZEALE SEQUESTRED IN THE YEERE 1650 BY THE MIRACULOUS AND HAPPY RETURNE OF THE KING RESTORED IN THE YEERE 1660 HEE SPENT HIS DAYES A PIOVS AND PAYNFULL MINISTRY. HEE LIVED BELOVED AND DIED DESIRED VPON THE (?) DAY OF SEPTEMBER IN THE YEERE 1664 IN ASSURANCE OF A FULL RESURRECTION.'

This loyal Royalist clergyman did much to restore the desecration of Puritan vandalism during the four remaining years of his ministry.

How happy people must have been during the first Restoration Christmas period, when we recall that Cromwell's parliament in 1654 passed a law prohibiting any merriment, or even religious service, to take place on Christmas Day. And further in 1656 an act of parliament abolished all festivals, commonly called Holy Days, thus compelling everyone, by law, to go to work. If you did not, you went to prison. And anyone caught putting up Christmas decorations, even in their own homes, and following the time honoured custom of kissing beneath the mistletoe bough were publically whipped and then placed in the village stocks.

A law was even passed making it illegal to eat mince pies; it being 'a punishable offence to make or eat a mince pie which is an evil ungodly and idolatrous thing.' Christmas puddings too came under the law, they were considered, 'an abominable thing to be avoided by Christians.'

How strange were these Puritans; and stranger still it is that these old laws have never been repealed!

One last item of interest; The Holy Days and Fasting Act 1551 - pre Restoration - still stands; and states firmly that on Christmas Day, you must attend church: and failure to do so will involve a heavy fine or imprisonment. The act continues that 'at the Nativity of our Lord, you must walk to church and from it.' So now you know, if before you did not!

THE NORTH AISLE

Beginning the itinerary at the FONT (8) (a modern copy of the 12th Century design) MEMORIALS to the family of Morley (9) can be seen on the west and north walls. That on the west wall, whereon figures the name of Bishop Morley, Bishop of Winchester, is the most interesting of the three.

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The top shield dated 1552 shows the Morley arms, 'Argent a lion rampant sable crowned or.' Impaling 'Argent a chevron between three excallops gules a crescent for difference', for Tancred.

The left shield dated 1586 shows Morley impaling Denham, 'gules three lozenge argent.'

THIS IS THE END OF PAGE 7 OF THE ORIGINAL SCRIPT. PAGE 8 IS MISSING. PAGE 9 CONTINUES:-

Here lieth Francis Morley, armiger, descended from the baron of the same name, his uncle, George Morley, bishop of Winchester, (a benefactor of fifty thousand pounds to the church and to the poor.).

Sole executor of his will, and also in his day a notable citizen of Winchester, representative in parliament for the counties of Southampton and Surrey during the peaceful reign of King William and Queen Mary.

He took to wife, Jane the eldest daughter of Charles Tancred of Ardan, in Co. York, armiger, the head of a very old family and estate in the same county.

From whom he begat seven sons and six daughters viz. Charles, Francis, George (died an infant in arms), George, Richard, Thomas, William, Dorothy, Elizabeth (died in infancy), Aleathea, Sara, Elizabeth (buried near by) and Jane.

He died at London, 10th December, aged 68 years, taking his departure in 1690.

Therefore, as a voluntary service and also moral obligation, Charles living within this parish and during the time of Charles II and Francis STD of the parish of Bishops Waltham, rector, and in the diocese of Winchester, sons and executors, have set up willingly and also as a humble memorial, this Monument, to a very beloved and equally loving father.

THE NORTH CHAPEL

The glory that once might have been, is now no longer. Of a necessity, in a later age with new requirements, a vestry and organ had to be accommodated.

But here are the relics of a past age. In the Vestry is a PISCINA and AUMBRY (a cupboard) (10); the latter in an excellent state of preservation, the slots for hinges and door bolt being plainly apparent.

Above upon this south wall can be seen traces of TUDOR COLOURED DECORATION.

BURIALS, here also took place. Beneath the organ is one named Taunt who was laid to rest in May 1667. Near by a small BRASS PLATE (11) on a slate grave says 'HERE LYETH Mr. EDWARD SEARLE FARMER OF DROXFORD WHO DEPARTED THIS LIFE Ye 8 DAY OF MAY IN THE 15 YEARE OF Ye RAIGNE OF KING JAMES OF ENGLAND & OF SCOTLAND Ye 50: BEING 72 YEARES OLD WHEN HE DIED & IN Ye YEARE OF OUR LORD GOD 1617.'

Thus he was a Tudor, being born in the early part of the reign of Henry VIII. The Brass is contemporary, and so it is interesting to find he was described as Mr. and Farmer. One would have expected him to be described as either, Husbandman or Yeoman: and so he in his day must have been one of the Droxford Worthies.

ROOD-LOFT

There is no longer a Rood (), but in the north pillar of the chancel is an oak door: opening it reveals steps leading up to an exit which may be observed above the pulpit.

PULPIT

The design is known as a wine-glass pulpit. It is not of great antiquity and came from St. Matthew's church, Denmark Hill, London.

Leaving the church by the south door, look on the East jamb of it; there you will see incised a MASS DIAL - the time piece of the middle ages. Upon the south wall there are three others; even in those days there was no excuse for being late!

THE TOWER

The tower bears the date 1599, four years before the great Queen Elizabeth died. It can scarcely commemorate the defeat of the Spanish Armada in the English Channel to the south, so perhaps it was begun in that year - no one knows now.

The belfry contains five bells hanging in the original oak frame:

- The Tenor, of 9.75 cwt, cast with the fourth in 1672 by Henry Knight II of Reading.
- The Third, is inscribed, 'God be our guyd, 1606.'
- The Second, is inscribed 'In God be our gude, 1631.' It was recast in 1899 when four bells were rehung with new fittings.
- The Treble, dated 1625, once hung in St. Margaret's, Canterbury. It was recast in 1969 and presented by Miss H.M. Allcard, a resident.

THE RECTORS, THE REGISTERS AND THE PLATE

Of the former a board shows our priests from 1288 to 1969. It hangs near the west door.

In 1538 Thomas Cromwell, the Vicar General, ordered the keeping of Parish Registers to record baptisms, marriages and burials. But it was some two decades before the order was fully complied with, and in the case of Droxford, they do not begin until 1633. They are in trust to the incumbent and contain much local history.

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Of the PLATE, none of the old remains. It was stolen during the years of tribulation and replaced by public subscription as late as 1813.

VALETE

This is not just an ancient monument, but the living centre of a Parish open to all for guidance and strength. It has been preserved down the ages for posterity with loving care.

Constant maintenance and repair are necessary to keep safe our heritage. Did you ever hear of Peter's Pence? It amounted to 1d. per hearth in a house, and was collected for the Pope, certainly from the 11th Century (since it is mentioned in a letter to King Canute) and so continued until it was abolished by King Henry VIII in 1534.

We hope you have enjoyed your visit and found this guide pamphlet of help and interest. If so, perhaps you could say a silent prayer?

E.J.J.

THIS GUIDE WAS WRITTEN IN 1969 OR SOON THEREAFTER.