



St. John's Church Brief History

THE CHURCH OF ST JOHN THE BAPTIST, BERWICK ST. JOHN

Although there has been a Church here for many centuries, and the list of known Rectors goes back to 1305, the present Church was built towards the end of the 15th century. In 1861 it was dismantled and restored, though on the same plan as before (with the exception of a porch to the north door) and for the most part using the same materials. There is much original medieval work in the Church, though not easily recognisable, as in 1861 it was re-tooled and re-chiseled. The tracery of the west and south windows is medieval, as also the small arch to the north aisle, and much of the tower. There are several wooden carved fragments, one of which has the arms of the family of Willoughby de Broke-Edward. Willoughby was Rector here from 1485 to 1506. The painting on wood of William de Wykeham, Bishop of Winchester, dates from about 1600. It was presented to the benefice by Mrs Lydiatt, widow of the Rev. Richard Lydiatt, Rector 1746-55, and has hung in the church since 1955. There are six bells, of which four were made in Aldbourne, Wiltshire, in the 18th century, and two in London in 1885. There is an 18th century communion plate, and interesting records and registers, the earliest entry being for a baptism in 1556. The Grove family hatchments in the north aisle are also of great interest.

Most interesting of all, however, are the effigies of two knights in 13th century armour. That in the south transept is to John Hussey, that in the north transept to Robert Lucy, both of whom would appear to have held estates in the parish. The Husseys were early proprietors of the manor and estate of Bridmore. The churchyard is notable for its many old ledger-tombs, and beautifully carved headstones.

The Rectory was built by the Rev. Thomas Boys, Rector from 1791 to 1817, partly with money from the executors of his predecessor, Edward Rolle, partly out of his own pocket, and partly with assistance from New College, Oxford.

Source: St. John's Church.