



A short history of Kemble Parish Church “All Saints”

Kemble ~ Anglo-Saxon “Kemele” or “Kemelegh” was transferred from Wiltshire in 1897 so that all its Church records are at Salisbury not Gloucester.

Cedwalla ~ King of Wessex ~ in the days of the Heptarchy, made a grant of land to Aldhelm ~ Abbot of Malmesbury, and a Church would no doubt have been built soon afterwards – It is possible that the colossal Yew Tree was planted at the same time.

The present church built on the same site as the Anglo-Saxon Church and dedicated to All Saints, was built about the year 1200 or 1220, in the early English Style. It was re-built, except the Tower, at a cost of £4700 in 1872-1878 when the north side was added.

The Tower of three stages is a fine example of early thirteenth century work – Four twelfth century sepulchral slabs may be seen on the south east buttress, and the scratch dials on the south buttress, these latter were used before there was a resident priest to show when he would next hold a service on the rounds of the district. The Spire rising to 120 feet, is a landmark for the whole countryside, and dates about the sixteenth century. The west doorway, under the Tower, is a good example of Transitional architecture, with twelfth century chevrons but early english mouldings.

The unusually large South Porch was built by William of Colern, Abbot of Malmesbury about the end of the reign of Henry III (1216-1272). At the entrance to the Church is a beautiful Norman arch, date about 1100, with chevron ornament, over which is a fragment of a Saxon tombstone. The porch contains a list of Vicars from the year 1327. The Chancel has three early english lancet windows, with shafts of Purbeck marble, at the east end a finely carved Sedilia. The half columns are like those in Somerford Keynes Church which suggests the the architect may have been the same man.

The Ewen Aisle ie. The south aisle, is said to have been built from the stones of the disused Ewen Church the key of which can be seen on the north west pillar of the chancel. On the south wall of the aisle is a recessed table tomb shewing several carved heads: possibly one may represent the Abbot of Malmesbury of that date.

There is also a double sedilia, and in the large East Window can be seen fragments of old stained glass. A piece of beautiful carved wooden tracery taken from the old south door is preserved here.

In the North Chapel (which has a vault underneath) and concealed by the organ, there is a Purbeck marble effigy of a crossed-legged Knight in mail (a Crusader) whose name is said to have been Allam or Hallam. (In 1408 Robert Hallam, a Cardinal, and Chancellor of Oxford University , was Bishop of Salisbury). There is a curious triple window of the thirteenth century said to have been brought from Salisbury Cathedral . Several steps of the Rood-loft may be seen at the entrance to the chapel.

The Font – of three stages, is a fine example of plain decorated work.

On the west wall of the Nave there are many monuments, some with heraldic bearings which were removed when the church was re-built 1872-1878.

Lord Biddulph of Kemble House is Lay Rector and Patron of the living. There are 220 sittings and the Church Registers date from 1678.

The Bells



No. 1. The Treble 81/4 cwt Robert Tymbrele and Harry Evens 1674

No.2. John Rudhall fecit 1790

No. 3. Appears to be the oldest bell in the Tower, no date, has certain words all around with symbols in old English characters in Latin, one or two words not decipherable.

No. 4. Cast 1905 Llewlyns and James Bristol. H.W.C. Vicar, R.D.C.-J. And J.D. Churchwardens

No. 5. 1869 "Lion and Unicorn patent".

Source: Kemble All Saints