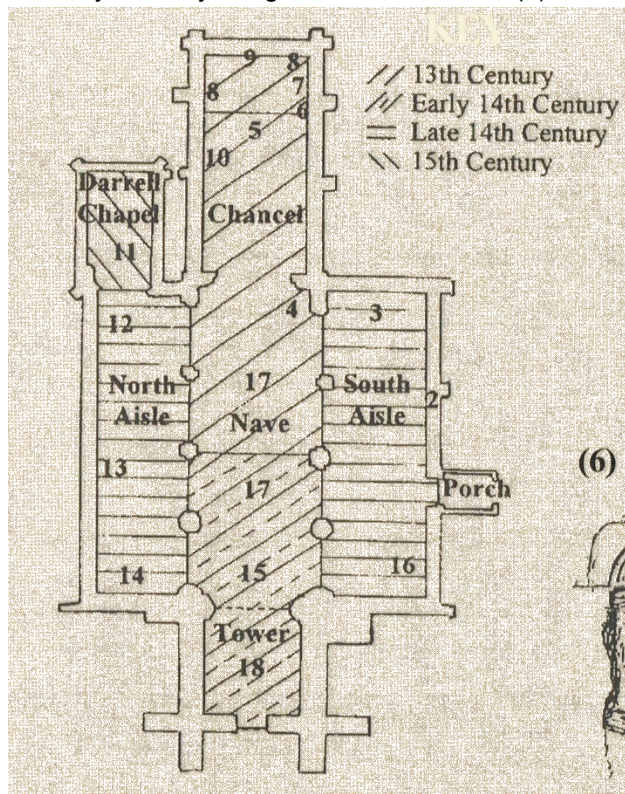




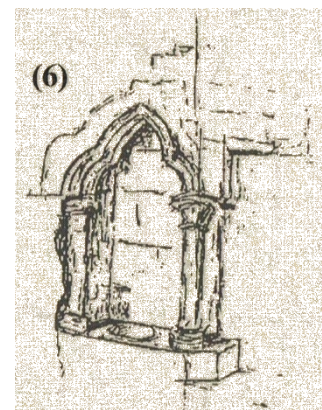
Holy Cross, Ramsbury

The original Anglo-Saxon cathedral minster was probably built on the same site as the present church. At the restoration of the church in 1891 the south wall had to be demolished. Within it were discovered some highly important Saxon carvings which now stand in the north-west corner of the church. Originally the church was cruciform in shape but in the late 14th Century the aisles were extended to the line of the transepts, giving the unusual square shape to the church. The chancel and first part of the nave date from the 13th century the rest of the nave and the tower are early 14th century.

Enter through the porch (1) built by vicar Harry Baber, at 1891 restoration. Turn right past memorials to family formerly living at Crowood House (2) to St. Helena Chapel. (3) Turn left through screen and past pulpit, both made of limes oak after 1891.



(4) Medieval screen would have been at chancel steps. In front of altar steps is inscribed stone to William de St. John, rector of Ramsbury in 1322 and possibly builder of church (5) 13th century piscine with trefoil head and Purbeck marble columns in sanctuary (6) lies beside monument to Sir William Jones (1631-82), (7) attorney general to Charles II, who had bought the manor of Ramsbury and built the present manor house.

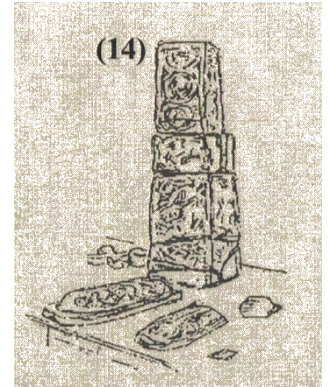


Monuments (8) to Burdett family who inherited the manor from the Jones family, including to Sir Francis Burdett, MP who for 1832 Reform Act which widened the franchise. His wife, Sofia, was a daughter of Thomas Coutts, the banker and their daughter, Angela inherited the Coutts fortune and was created the first baroness in her own right for her philanthropic works. The last baronet died in 1951. Stained glass window (9) restored in 1891. Late 15th century mutilated canopied altar-tomb of Purbeck Marble (10), all brasses in church removed at time of civil war.



Turn right out of chancel into 15th century Darrell chapel (11) built by Calston family of Littlecote, from whom it passed by marriage to Darrell family. Organ (12), probably pre-1838, with 18th century pipework possibly by George Pike England.

Pass list of bishops and vicars (13) to Saxon Stones (14). Shaft Stafford knot decoration, also grave covers and domed slabs. Remaining fragments of later date.



Turn towards crossing to font (15). Bowl brought from manor grounds in 1842, with carving by Thomas Meyrick of village. Old church clock (16) now restored. In nave chandeliers (17) dated 1751 from London workshop, cost parishioners £22 16s. 6d. Peal of six bells in tower (18) hung in 1708, maker Abraham Rudhall, of Gloucester. Tenor bell recast 1865.

History

The village of Ramsbury lies off the Roman Road from London to Bath and may have been settled in the Saxon period, possibly by Hraefn who set up his burgh, or fortified site here. Hence the name Hraefn's burgh which through time has become Ramsbury.

In the 7th and 8th centuries an important iron smelting forge was operating in the high Street, using ore possibly from Seend, near Devizes. From 909- 1058 the Bishop in Wiltshire, whose diocese also included Berkshire, resided at Ramsbury. In 1058 the bishopric was joined to that of Sherborne and in 1075 the united diocese was given a new see-city at Old Sarum, a manor belonging to the Ramsbury diocese, before finally moving to Salisbury. Of the ten bishops of Ramsbury three became Archbishops of Canterbury. In 1974 the bishopric was revived as a suffragan to Salisbury.

At the time of the Domesday, Ramsbury was a thriving place with ten corn mills serving a rich agricultural area. From the 16th to 18th centuries industries such as tanning and brewing were added to all the other local activities, with the main highway being used as a route to transport goods in and out of the village.

Despite having no access to the canal and railway, the key to Ramsbury's growth has been its position on a trading route and more recently its juxtaposition to the M4 motorway.

