

St James Church, South Wraxall

The Church is an ancient building in Early Perpendicular style, restored in 1823 and again in 1882. Before 1882 it appeared like a Non-Conformist Chapel of an early kind, with its box pews, small singing gallery, organ and vestry at the West End. The roof was plastered. An arch of early English style separated the Chancel from the nave.

The oldest wall tablet in the Chancel bears a quaint inscription, beginning, "Laugh not, fanatics" (erected in memory of W Jones who died in 1660).

THE NORTH AISLE was added in 1823 and, like the Chancel which preceded the present one, is of little interest.

THE LONG'S CHAPEL is the most interesting part of the building. It is said to have been built in the 14th century, though the upper portions bear traces of the 15th or 16th centuries. The Chapel was taken over by Robert Long as a family pew in 1566, as will be seen by the inscription on the doorway outside: "R. ANNO DOMINI, 1566 L". On one side of the inscription is the Fetterlock which the Longs carried as Lords of the Manor of Draycot and on the other side the Stag's Head connecting them with Wraxall (this Robert Long is thought to have been the first Protestant of the House of Long). The remains of an older archway lie behind the inscription.

On the South side of the Chapel is an ancient **ALTAR TOMB** on which reposes the full length effigy of a lady, said to be the Lady Katherine, widow (note the veil) of Sir Henry Long, who died about 1490. The memorial was probably erected by the above named Robert Long in honour of his mother. On the front panel are the Arms of Long, impaling the Berkley and Seymour Quarterings, showing that the deceased was by birth a Berkley, descended from a Seymour heiress and by marriage a Long. Before 1882 this monument stood against the East wall of the Chapel and it concealed a portion of one of the restored empty niches which are evidently older than the tomb itself.

THE HAGIOSCOPE was found when the Church was restored in 1882. It had evidently been closed up at the time of the so called restoration in 1823, or perhaps later.

THE OLD PISCINA was restored in 1882, and at the same time it was intended to cover the floor with tiles bearing the Long Badges but the old wooden floor was found to have concealed a number of memorial stones bearing leaden inscriptions. It was therefore decided to leave the stones untouched and to place slabs of marble, on which the same inscriptions were copied, over them.

THE TOWER is ancient and its masonry bears signs of the restoration of at least three parts of the building. It contains six bells which were recast in 1769 by Abraham Bilbie at Chew Stoke. Two of the bells have minor cracks and the wooden cradle is in need of replacement. For safety reasons only one bell can be rung but it is hoped that funds can be found to restore the peal back to former glory. The Tower is surmounted by a Saddleback roof, covered with stone and

supported by massive arches of stone vaulted beneath it. The stairs ascending the Tower are in a square building, like a buttress, on the North side; placed there, no doubt, to give additional support to the Tower and its heavy roof.

THE FONT, intended for Immersion, is old, with a more modern base.

There is an ancient **SUN DIAL** over the porch on the outside of the Church.

Note: The description above is copied, in part, from an earlier manuscript written about 1900 - 1910, which is no longer easily legible.