
Church Stories

Holy Trinity Bincombe



The story of this church has been taken from a number of sources and is, by collective assumption, reasonably accurate. The story is not definitive however and is always open to critique, correction and addition. All contributions welcome.
All photography c. A Wood

The Parish

Before the Norman conquest in 1066, 'Beincombe' belonged to Earl Harold, later King of England who was defeated at the Battle of Hastings by William 1st, known as 'The Conqueror'.

The name probably means a place where beans were grown, beans being a very important staple food in prehistoric and Saxon times.

William 1 gave the lands of Bincombe to the monastery of St Stephen in Caen, Normandy.

When King Henry VIII suppressed the foreign houses, Bincombe went to the college of St Stephen at Winchester. Then, at the general dissolution of the monasteries, it was given to Richard Baker and Sir Richard Sackville. In 1570, it was bought by Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge. The College still owns it and is the Patron of the Living.



In 1692, the college also became the patron of Broadway Church and the two parishes were 'consolidated' in 1738. In 1808, the Rectory at Bincombe burned down and, since then, the Rectors have lived at Broadway. In 1981, the United Parish of Bincombe with Broadway became part of a new United Benefice with Upwey and Buckland Rippers,

The Church

Most of the present building is in the Early English style of about 1250 -1350. Earlier Norman work is to be seen in the Font and the blocked up North Doorway. In the north wall is a blocked up hagioscope or squint.



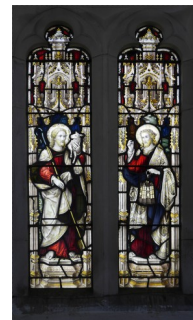
The original door in the north wall can still be easily seen as well as the markings of the porch that once surrounded it.



The Font is of Purbeck marble on a rough stone base. On its rim are traces of the fixings of the old cover. In those days, Fonts were kept filled and, in 1236, the Archbishop ordered that the covers should be secured to prevent the water being stolen for superstitious purposes.



The Windows on the south side are in the Perpendicular style of the mid 1400s.



The window in memory of William and Susan Foot on the north side depicts Jesus as the **Good Shepherd** and **Light of the World**.

Rood Screen Light

From outside, can be seen the blocked up window high in the south wall which gave light to the Rood Screen which before the Reformation, stood across the Chancel arch.



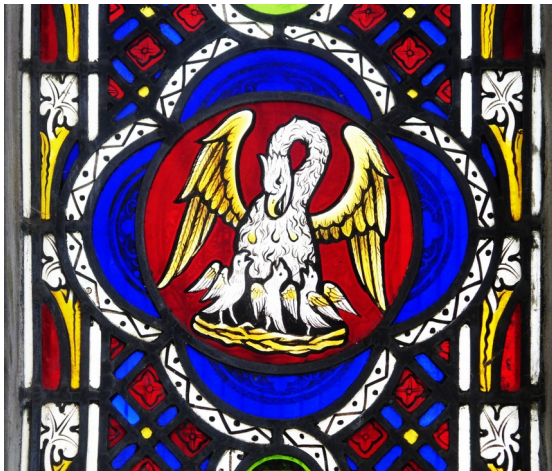
The South Door, dated 1779, has the Churchwardens' initials W.L and W.M. on it. Beside it is the mediaeval Holy water stoop.



The Chancel was extensively altered and the floor raised in 1862. All the furniture is also of that date.



The East Window is a memorial to Elizabeth, widow of John Howship, Surgeon. It depicts Jesus with Martha and Mary, and the raising of Jairus's daughter. Below are the symbols of Jesus as Lamb of God and the Pelican 'vulning' or wounding herself to feed her young. Christianity adopted the old legend to symbolise Christ, shedding his blood for our salvation.



The Organ was originally installed in Broadway Church in 1873 and moved to Bincombe in 1901.

The Bells: The larger bell, dated 1658, is by Thomas Purdue. The smaller one, dated 1594, is by John Wills of Salisbury and is inscribed 'Feare God'.

The Clock was installed as a thanksgiving for delivery and victory in the 1939-1945 War

The Roof was completely renewed and other repairs effected in 1995 at a cost of £82,000. The sound system and Loop were installed in 2001.

The Thomas Hardy Connection and the Grand Old Duke of York



The earliest surviving Register dates from 1658. Entries for 1801 include the names of two German-born soldiers of the York Hussars who were shot for desertion and buried in the Churchyard. At that time, George 3rd spent much of the summer at Weymouth and the Hussars camped on Bincombe Down as Britain faced the threat of invasion from Napoleon Bonaparte, it may well have been here that the Grand Old Duke of York, the brother of the King, marched his ten thousand men up and down the hill to fill their time. It must have seemed strange in such a quiet place to have the noise and bustle of soldiers close by.

The writer Thomas Hardy must have heard of the occurrence as he wrote a short story entitled 'The Melancholy Hussar of the German Legion' in 1890.

"Here stretch the downs; high and breezy and green, absolutely unchanged since those eventful days. A plough has never disturbed the turf and sod that was upper most then is uppermost now.... At night, when I walk across the lonely place, it is impossible to avoid hearing, amid the scourings of the wind over the grass-bents and thistles, the old trumpet and bugle calls, the rattle of halters.... From within the canvases come guttural syllables of foreign tongues, and broken songs of the fatherland."

Hardy must have seen the Register entries:

Match: Tina (Corps.) in His Majesty's Regmt. Of York Hussars, and Shot for Desertion, was buried June 30th 1801, aged 22 years. Born in the town of Sarrbruk ,

Chritoph Bless, belonging to His Majesty's Regmt Of York Hussars, who was Shot for Desertion was buried June 30* 1801, aged 22 years. Born at Lothaargen, Alsatia.

"Their graves were dug at the back of the little church, near the wall. There is no memorial to mark the spot... The older villagers, however, who knew of the episode from their parents, still recollect the place where the soldiers lie"



Arrow Scrape

This is pure speculation but has been included in the story only to promote question and further exploration. It is known that the Archery Laws applied at this church as elsewhere.

The Archery Laws

The first English Archery Law was passed in **1252**. In 1252 the '**Assize of Arms**' ensured that all Englishmen were ordered, by law, that every man between the age of 15 to 60 years old should equip themselves with a bow and arrows.

The Plantagenet King Edward III took this further and decreed the **Archery Law in 1363** which commanded the obligatory practice of archery on Sundays and holidays! The Archery Law "forbade, on pain of death, all sport that took up time better spent on war training especially archery practise".

King Henry I later proclaimed that an archer would be absolved of murder, if he killed a man during archery practise!

In **1542** another Act established that the minimum target distance for anyone over the age of 24 years was 220 yards.

Stand by the door of the church and look at the stone where you will see lines and grooves. It is perfectly possible that these are no more than natural features in the stone, weathered over the years. Look to the right however and you will see a mature Yew tree towards the edge of the church yard. It is known that yews were often used both as a source for wood for longbows as well as a convenient target or Butt. It is also known that arrow metal was soft and easily blunted so the arrow heads were often scraped across the stone of the church door to sharpen and also straighten then ready to be fired again. You will need to look and make up your own mind about the lines and the deeper grooves like the one pictured above. When you touch the grooves, are you touching the same place that parishioners touched in the past as they stayed after the Sunday service to practice their marksmanship?