

A Short History of the Parish of Bourton on the Water and a Guide to the Church of St Lawrence

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Much has changed in our church building over the years, with each generation making its mark, including us!

In 2017, after many years of discussion, research and planning we undertook a major 8 month re-ordering project to make the interior more suited to the needs of the Church family and local community today.



The alterations were carried out using high quality materials and executed with outstanding craftsmanship and skill. The contemporary features were sympathetically applied in consideration of the age and existing beauty of the church building.



The main entrance has been moved to the West door and the glass doors provide a stunning view through the South aisle to the high altar. A small meeting room has been created in the north-west corner and a staircase to the balcony above provides additional space & seating. Our kitchen & toilet facilities are much improved enabling us to serve refreshments with ease. The new pale coloured Cotswold stone floor and clean stonework has lightened the whole space - adding to the feeling of peace - whilst the under-floor heating system provides a higher level of comfort in winter. Removing pews from the North aisle means we now have a flexible area for seating, our toddler group - Bumblebeez, events, exhibitions and refreshments. We re-opened in August 2017.

Read on for information about the history of our parish and church buildings!

*For more information about our churches today, please visit our website at
www.bourtonparishchurch.co.uk*

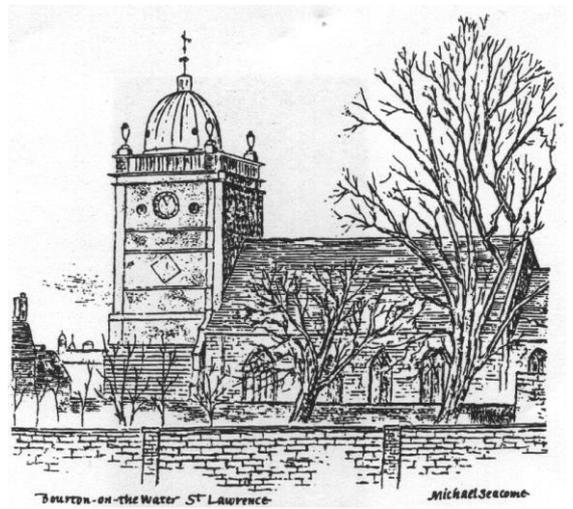


*We are part of the Benefice of Bourton on the Water
with Clapton and the Rissingtons in the Diocese of Gloucester*



A brief history of Bourton on the Water

There is plenty of evidence about the early occupation of Bourton on the Water. Iron-age man was here and the early British encampment of Salmonsbury was later occupied by the 2nd August Legion of the Roman Imperial Army. In late Roman times the settlement moved out of the encampment to build villas along the banks of the River Windrush.



However, we know little of the Christian beginnings in Roman times, though a charter exists to show that in the year 708AD a local Saxon king, Cenred, gave lands in his kingdom to the newly founded Abbey and Convent of Evesham. In return the Abbot was to provide monks to spread the Gospel in specific places in the kingdom including Bourton on the Water. The charter suggests that a simple wooden church was built here in 709AD. By the 10th Century charters clearly talk of the existence of a church here, and the Domesday Register (1086) notes that Bourton has its own priest with 60 acres of land and a church.

A guide to the parish Church

The oldest part of St Lawrence's Church is the CHANCEL, built by an early benefactor, Walter de Burhton in 1328, replacing an earlier Saxon/Norman one. On the south side of the east wall is an aumbry (or communion cupboard) and above it traces of a stone bracket on which probably stood a statue of the patron saint. The bracket was discovered in 1874 when the huge Classic altar-piece of 1784 was removed, at which time traces were found of a mural painting round the East Window. Since then there has been evidence found of painting from Elizabethan times. On the south wall of the sanctuary is a window from the early 14th century with a matching one further down the south wall of the Choir; and between is a priest's door of the same period. The eastern-most window contains a level sedilia (window seat for assistant priests or servers) and beyond it a piscina where cruets of wine and water may be placed for use in Holy Communion. In modern times an oak door has been added to the aumbry.

The SANCTUARY is a good height due to the Crypt beneath, which has a flattened roof with two plain ribs. The Crypt is probably the site of the original reliquary crypt-chapel of about 1120AD. Some former Rectors and their families lie buried here. A tradition states that a passage went from the Crypt to the Manor house – once the summer palace of the Abbot of Evesham and in later times the Rectory (as when Charles I stayed as a guest of Dr Thomas Temple in the 17th Century).

The 'restorers' of the 1784 swept away the original rood-screen and erected a partition-wall, a low round-headed arch and a flat plaster-covered ceiling to the chancel, all of which were removed in 1874. In 1928 Miss AB Moore gave the present reredos (behind the altar), the chancel ceiling and the oak screens, in memory of members of her family, and marking the sixth centenary of the founding of the present Chancel. The Chancel shows the Coats of Arms of the Patrons of the church, repeated on the Oak Screens.

The REREDOS panels represent the Annunciation, the Visit of the Magi, Christ on the Cross between St Mary and St John, the Resurrection and Mary Magdalene meeting the Risen Christ. Standard candlesticks were made later to match the English Altar.

The SANCTUARY has a fine English Oak set of furniture created by Messrs Sly of Northleach: a Bishop's Chair in memory of Lady Ena Swiney and bearing her armorial arms, a prayer desk in memory of Helen Lumsden and a matching sedilia desk in remembrance of Frederick Alder, for many years a Reader in the Parish Church.

The ORGAN: Originally there was a second-hand instrument from Oxford in about 1880. This was rebuilt in 1949, incorporating the original Swell Organ by Messrs JW Walker of London. After alterations and additional improvements in 1972 by Messrs Osmunds of Taunton, it was totally rebuilt between 1983-1985 with a new Choir-Great Organ together with excellent parts of the original Swell, and all modern electronic controls, by John Coulson of Bristol.

The SCREENS were a gift of George E Moore in memory of his parents, designed by FE Howard and executed in 1924, following the ancient Cotswold traditional design. The SHIELDS on the cresting of the Screens, and repeated in the

Chancel ceiling, recall the Patrons of the Parish – Evesham Abbey, Lord Chandos, De Clare Earl of Gloucester (St Peter's crossed keys), the Provincial Arms of Canterbury, Elizabeth I, and Wadham College, Oxford; a current patron.

The PULPIT is in linenfold oak panelling given in 1888 in memory of the Revd JS Hulme, Rector 1872-1884 and sometime Fellow of Wadham College.

The NAVE: When Walter de Burhton built his church of 1328, it included a Norman Nave and 'saddleback' Tower between Nave and Chancel; it had a South Aisle, originally a chantry chapel to the Blessed Virgin Mary; this was founded by Walter in 1325 and later in the 17th century became the 'Clapton Aisle' (used by Clapton worshippers certainly until their church was rebuilt in 1670, after years of disrepair and disuse). In 1784 it was agreed that an 18th century Nave be built with a Neo-Classical Tower together with a low false ceiling to the Chancel. In 1875 Sir Thomas Jackson began to rebuild a Victorian Gothic North Aisle, to be followed by his fine SOUTH PORCH and in 1891 the Nave was altered from Classical to Gothic – much as you see it now. Note the fine KING-POST NAVE ROOF interior- said by experts that although only Victorian, the best example in Gloucestershire.

BELLS, CLOCK and CARILLON: A ring of eight bells (the oldest a Rudhall bell of 1650) were recast and rehung in 1957. The diamond-shaped clock of 1785 was replaced in 1911 by a Westminster chime clock and carillon playing a different hymn tune each day of the week, three-hourly 6am – 9pm. In 2016, following a thorough inspection, Taylor's of Loughborough repainted the iron bell frame and all worn parts were repaired or replaced.

The WINDOWS are all memorials, mostly the work of C E Kempe Studios and C E Kempe & Co Ltd. The FONTS: A broken font of the 18th Century is in the west wall, now in the meeting room. The present font is from 1875.

Our current Rector is the Rev Rowena King, previously a curate in Dursley, Gloucestershire. She began her ministry with us in October 2018.