

BARTON ST DAVID CHURCH.



The Church stands on the south side of the parish, close to the Kingweston parish boundary. It is a cruciform building with a tower on the north side of the chancel. The history of the church has to be read from the building itself. In the Norman period (12th century) a church was built here, perhaps of nave and chancel only and of this the present north doorway is evidence. In the 13th century a larger church was built and the three arches leading from the nave into the chancel and side chapels date from this time. The chancel was rebuilt in the early 14th century and it is not entirely in line with the nave. The tower dates from the late 14th or 15th century and is octagonal^[1] from the ground which is unusual. Norfolk has six towers of this sort and there are isolated examples in Suffolk, Yorkshire, Lancashire, Shropshire, Oxfordshire and Northamptonshire. So far as we know this is the only instance in the south west of England. The tower contains six bells of different dates ranging from 1591 to 1962. Why it was placed in this unusual position is not known, but the builders may have thought that there was too little room for it at the west end of the nave.

The Chancel. The Holy Table is inscribed THE GIFT OF WILLIAM KELWAIE 1613 and was enlarged in 1952. There is also a piscina (stone basin) dating from the early 14th century which was used for the rinsing of the sacred vessels at Mass. On the south wall of the chancel is a modern tablet, commemorating Henry Adams, who was born in the parish around 1583. The tablet states that he was the Henry Adams who emigrated to America and whose descendants produced two Presidents of the United States, John Adams 1797-1801 and his son John Quincy Adams 1825-1829. Looking to the other side of the chancel there is a squint giving a direct view from the ringing chamber to the sanctuary. Probably in medieval times somebody was stationed here during Mass to ring a bell at the Consecration to remind people in the parish of what was being done in the church. Looking through the squint he would know exactly when this was to be done. Nearby is the manual organ. Sometime between 1948 and 1951 electricity was brought to the church and the bellows for the organ no longer had to be operated by hand, no doubt to the relief of the young lads in the congregation whose task it was. The remains of a doorway which probably led to a rood loft are hidden by the organ and its pipes. In 2005, in memory of her husband Lt General Sir Harold Redman KCB, CBE, Lady Redman gifted an electronic organ^[2] to Barton St David on the refurbishment of the West Lulworth pipe organ.

The South Transept was built in 1894 to increase the seating accommodation. It took the place of the original south chapel built in the 13th century which contained a side altar. After the 16th century the chapel fell into disuse and was eventually pulled down. Most of the furnishings in the church are Victorian, but in the bell tower are two bench ends (poppy heads) dating from the late 15th or 16th century. Many of the transept pews were sold in 1997 to help pay for the work of renovating the area. It also contains a memorial to members of the Indoe family. On the sill of the south window is a gradine – a shelf for the rear of an altar – which was carved by a local lady in 1893. Refurbishment of the transept and vestry took place during the 1990s when, among many improvements and additions, doors replaced curtains to these areas.

The Nave east wall was restored in the 19th century and the exposed stonework dates from that time as does the small arch behind the reading desk. The Pulpit, which is Jacobean, was made in the early 17th century and used to stand where the electric organ is now sited. Unfortunately it was moved in the 19th century to its present position, so that now some of the carved work is out of sight and the two plain sides, which were originally against the walls, are now exposed. Once there was a gallery at the west end of the nave, occupied by the church musicians (singers and players of instruments) and the painting of King David now over the chancel arch hung on the front of it. The gallery, mentioned several times in the churchwardens' accounts, was taken down in 1859. The font is Perpendicular of the 15th century. It has been moved twice, but is now in its original and proper place near the main door of the Church. Across the nave to its south wall is a blocked doorway - the original purpose for it is not known. The list of vicars begins in 1309 but there are some obvious gaps in the earlier part, however, from 1662 the list is complete. Vicars have not always lived in the parish; from 1787 to 1829 the vicar was also Rector of East Lydford and lived there. There was no vicarage (official house of residence) here until one was built in 1854. In 1932 the parish of Kingweston was united to Barton St David, the incumbent being Rector of Kingweston and Vicar of Barton, and in 1991 these two parishes joined to Keinton Mandeville and Lydford-on-Fosse. A millenium project to renew the hassocks on the theme of "All things bright and beautiful, all creatures great and small" has been completed. The west window was completely refurbished in 2009 with funds raised in the village.

The Porch is said to be Norman and is covered with stone tiles. Around the doorway to the church traces of lime wash can be seen and also, in the right light, some initials or marks made by the stonemasons when forming the blocks supporting the seating are evident. Outside in the churchyard, which incidentally was extended twice last century, there is the remains of a churchyard cross. Only the shaft remains but the shape of the canopy over the figure suggests a date in the 14th century. It is not possible to say definitely whom the figure represents although it appears to be that of a bishop with pilgrims wallet. The rainwater heads at the east end of the

church show a date of 1872, the same year that a new church was built at Hornblotton containing a similar organ to that at Barton. Maybe there was a connection at that time. On the gable ends of the chancel and nave are Ionic crosses, at one time there would have been similar crosses on all the gable ends but they are prone to damage by the elements. The new oak gates at the main entrance and the bottom of the churchyard were donated by Peter Farrant and made by John Goodman.

21 November 2015

Addenda.

1. Somerset has a number of towers which are partly octagonal, square at the base and turning octagonal higher up. North Curry, Stoke St Gregory, Bishop's Hull, Pitminster, Barrington, South Petherton, Somerton, Podimore, Weston Bampfylde, Doulting, Ilchester.

2. Unfortunately, in July 2014 as a result of a violent electrical storm, the electronics in the 'Redman' organ were irreparably damaged.

The Bells

Treble:	Given by George & Sarah Plumley 1962.	J. Taylor
2nd:	Given to commemorate the Coronation of King George V 1911.	J. Taylor
3rd:	Unmarked.	
4th:	Give thanks to God 1591.	
5th:	Give thanks to God 1591. (Re-cast 1962)	J. Taylor
6th:	AD 1693. (Re-cast 1911)	J. Taylor