

King Charles 1 (who had been executed after the Civil War). We try to be more tolerant and understanding of each other now!

EXTENSION

This extension, including the kitchen, storage and a toilet (suitable for baby changing and people with disabilities), was built as part of alterations to fit the building for 21st Century users, which also included step-free routes to most areas and a loop system for hearing aids.

BELLS

These two bell ropes (“sallies”) are for ringing the church bells, dating from about 1400 and 1665. Ringing bells has been a Christian custom from time immemorial. People did not have clocks and watches. However, all church bells were silent during the Second World War, as they were to be used as an alarm signal if we were ever invaded. Upstairs tubular bells (from Queen Victoria’s Diamond Jubilee 1897) can be used to play hymn tunes etc.

OUTSIDE

The 1963 replica of a 1779 sundial over the main entrance to the Church reminds us of a way of telling the time (if the Sun shone!) before everyone had clocks and watches. The Latin means “be mindful of death” – in other words, to remember to live a good life while we are alive.

On the opposite side of the Church is the blocked-up “Devil’s door”. At one time it was believed that the north side belonged to the Devil, so this door was left open during baptisms to let him out. Later it was kept shut to keep him out.

Why is the churchyard wall built in so many different materials? Each of many landowners in the parish was responsible for a short stretch of it. When some failed in their duties, it was reported that pigs got into the churchyard and started uprooting graves! Nowadays Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council is responsible for all the walls.

There is no more room for new graves, but the churchyard was the place of burial for all residents of the parish (irrespective of religion). Those buried include those killed locally in the 17th Century Civil War and one of the first fatalities (1827) on a public railway.

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A GUIDE TO OUR LIVING CHURCH. JUNE 2023

ENTRANCE PORCH

On your way into Church on the left hand wall

Remnants of a stone cross, found in the Churchyard, some 1,000 years old. So, Christians have been worshipping on this site since at least the time this was carved.

Opposite is our noticeboard, showing what Christians are doing here nowadays. Some summaries of what followers of the Christian faith believe are available in Church.

Doorway into Nave:

We don’t know when the first church was built here – one theory of the origin of the place name “Eggescliffe” is that it means “the church on the cliff”. The round arch above the door is in the style used by the Normans (after 1066). Grooves in the door jambs suggest that villagers used the stone for sharpening their knives.

FONT

This has been used for some 800 years for baptisms (christenings). New people of all ages are welcomed into the family of the Church here with water. That is why it is near the main entrance of the Church as a symbol of welcome.

BOX PEWS

These date from about 1633. They are said to be irregular in size to fit the families who paid for them! The woodwork was designed to keep out the draughts (no central heating then!) and have a candle holder (no electric lighting then!)

PULPIT

From here is preached the “sermon”, in which the Christian faith is explained, and the people are encouraged in their faith. Above it is a canopy called a “tester”, to reflect the speaker’s voice down to the people. We now have a microphone and loudspeakers!

UNDER THE TOWER

In past centuries when important people died it was customary to hang a “hatchment” showing their coat of arms outside their home. This one is of

Edward Maltby, Bishop of Durham 1836 to 1856. The half with his coat of arms is black but the other half with those of the Bishop of Durham is white, because the succession of Bishops continued after him. There is a Bishop of Durham to this day. He leads the Church of England between the Tees and the Tyne and sits and speaks in the House of Lords. Around the mitre (Bishop's cap) on the hatchment is a coronet. Prior to Maltby, there were Prince Bishops of Durham, rulers of both church and county.

CHANCEL

The area beyond the screen is called the "Chancel". The screen and the stalls where the clergy and choir sat have been here some 350 years. Their design was intended to relieve the bareness of this part of our Church, inspired by John Cosin, then Prince Bishop of Durham, who followed the command in the Bible, "Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness!" We no longer have a regular choir. Music-making and taking services are now done from more convenient places, using moveable items.

The Chancel also has a door into the Vestry, where robes and other accessories for services and administration are kept and there is access for the organist.

ALTAR

The Communion Table, usually known as the "Altar", is normally used for the main services of Holy Communion. The embroidered hanging ("frontal") is in memory of Howard Taylor, a "Reader" (licensed lay minister) of this church, who died in 2003. People kneel at this "communion rail" to receive the bread and wine. In the cupboard ("aumbry") next to the light on the left wall are kept bread and wine (consecrated at a Holy Communion service) for taking to our housebound members.

PISCINA, SEDILIA & PRIEST'S DOOR

Left to right, we see three items from how the Church used to be run in the Middle Ages. People then may not have been so tall, but floor levels were raised later.

A basin ("piscina") for washing the vessels used at Holy Communion ("Mass")

Three seats ("sedilia") for the priest and an assistant on each side

The "Priest's Door" – to give the Rector independent access to the Chancel - he had to pay for its upkeep! Nowadays the fabric of the whole of this church is maintained by the giving of members and visitors.

LECTERN

From here the Bible is read aloud to the people at services. On the wall

behind is a memorial plaque. Can you spot where the sculptor corrected his spelling? A man from Newsham (a hamlet some 3 miles west of here, which is still served by this church) who died in 1611 is commemorated, but the Latin words say that it was put there by his son, a London goldsmith, in 1663 (perhaps a local man went to London, made his fortune, and could then afford this?).

CHILDREN'S WORK

Children are always welcome at St John's, we provide welcoming and appropriate fun activities for babies, children and young people to learn and grow in faith. We have dedicated church activities as well as working closely with Egglecliffe Primary School.

WEDDING KNEELERS

These kneelers were embroidered by members of this church for use by the bride and groom during weddings. The kneelers are not normally displayed or used where you see them.

AISLABY AISLE

This part of the church is called the "Aislaby Aisle", after the family of this name. Stone effigies of 13th Century knights (one from this family) are here and in the entrance porch. There is a hamlet called "Aislaby", still served by this church, but people from there don't have to sit here!

In 2007 this aisle was carpeted and storage cupboards and sink facilities were built. This space is adaptable for all sorts of church activities, including our Wednesday morning informal Morning Prayer services and coffee mornings. It was the place where Church members from the local area ("the Deanery") joined the present Bishop of Durham (Right Reverend Paul Butler) when he started his prayer walk through this Deanery.

The carved wooden communion table is normally here.

MEMORIAL BOOK

In this carved wooden box is a book inscribed with the names of the departed, who are remembered by name in prayers at the main service on the Sunday near the anniversary of their death.

CHAINED BOOKS

At one time books were so valuable that they were kept chained, so that the readers could not take them away. Not so today! These 17th Century books were about heated controversies of the time – differences between the Church of England and Roman Catholicism and the life and actions of