

Welcome to the history pages of St. James the Great, Longdon. Much of what follows has been put together by people of the village and of the worshipping community. Mrs. Maureen Piper, Mr. Robert Udall and Mr. Tom Badgery are thanked for their significant contributions.

The Nave

Constituting the largest portion of the building, the nave also happens to be the oldest part of the church. Built in the early part of the 12th century, the magnificent nave arch clearly reflects its Norman origins.

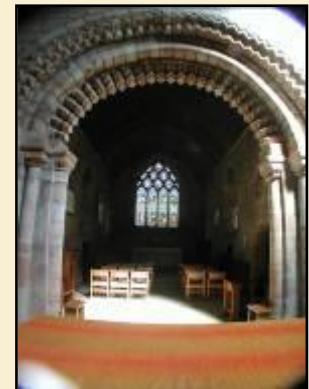
The nave serves as the ‘gathering place’ for those who come together to offer their worship, prayer and praise to God, and to receive encouragement and strength for worshipping and serving God in their daily lives throughout the week. Such life-giving worship has been celebrated here every week for well over 850 years!



The original vaulted wooden ceiling (similar in style to the Chancel ceiling) had deteriorated and was replaced in 1973/74. The outline of the original ceiling can be seen on the wall above the arch.

The Romanesque Norman Arch

Dividing the nave from the chancel, this forms a magnificent centre piece to the church. The lower course of the arch is of particular interest. Above the arch, near the apex of the roof, it is just possible to make out the remaining colours of a medieval mural. This had been in the space between the ceiling and the roof. The date of this arch is believed to be 1150 AD.



The North Transept

This extension was added to the church in 1870 at a cost of £1100. Half of this money was given by Sir Charles Forster, MP, whose family also provided additional sandstone from a quarry on the local Lysways estate. Several memorials to members of the Forster family can be seen in the North Transept. The diamond-shaped coat of arms (called a hatchment) on the west wall, which features a stag's head, is that of Charles Smith Forster. The white marble tomb at the north end of the transept is in memory of John Forster of Hanch Hall. This monument was until 1947 located in the Stonywell chapel opposite where it served as the chapel altar.

The Memorial Pulpit

The pulpit is the place from which the preacher traditionally delivered the sermon message. Although used less frequently these days, this pulpit nevertheless continues to symbolise the “Ministry of Proclamation” of God’s word and will for His people, which remains a vital part of our contemporary Christian ministry of teaching and nurture.

The church originally had a stone pulpit - it was mentioned in church descriptions of 1892 - but this has disappeared without trace. This current oak pulpit is one of three pieces of woodwork in the church which has been crafted by Robert Bridgeman and Son. It was put in the church in 1902/03 and originally stood in the nave to the south of the chancel arch. It was modified in 1921 to add the Roll of Honour listing the names of the seventeen from Longdon who lost their lives serving their country in the 1914/18 War. The pulpit is the parish memorial to those who gave their lives in that war.

The inscribed names are as follows:

Arnold E.	Davis W.C.
Dix E.	Greatrix H.
Hackett A.E.	Harvey J.C.
Hitchens A. J.	Johnson T.T.
Jones M.	Lawrence L.
Mobberley G.	Morris J.
Oldacre T.	Orton J.
Smith A.H.	Turner William
Turner Willis	



There is a memorial in a window in the Stoneywell Chapel to those lost in the second World War.



The North Wall Window

This attractive window is the work of Patrick Martin. Dedicated in 1992 by Keith, Bishop of Lichfield, it was the gift of Mrs Jan Yorke-Brooks in memory of her husband Anthony Edward Yorke-Brooks. The window depicts the 'Heavenly City' as revealed to John in his vision in the book of Revelation. God the Son is shown as Christ on the throne, wearing the crown of thorns. God the Spirit is shown in the form of a hovering dove with wings of fire. You are invited to find God the Father embracing you with his eyes from the centre of the City.

The Baptismal Font

Baptism is the means by which persons of all ages are received into the fellowship of God's family. Through the element of water - a powerful symbol of cleansing and life - and the faithful promises and gracious action of God Himself, baptised persons are 'adopted' into Jesus' family, with whom they have the opportunity to grow in faith and love and to serve God in His world in their daily lives.

This font, of Norman origin, has a lead-lined bowl (which shows hinge and lock marks) and a solid oak cover. It stands on a piece of 13/14th century foliated stone which is believed to have come from Lichfield Cathedral when it was being restored shortly after the Civil War.





The Tower

Situated at the west end of the church, the tower is built in Gothic perpendicular style, with buttresses, and is capped with battlements and pinnacles. It is thought to have been built circa 1450.

Our Patron Saint -James The Great

St. James is the patron saint of Spain. It is believed that his remains are enshrined at Santiago de Compostela in North-Western Spain. Santiago de Compostela became a place of pilgrimage in the early middle ages and pilgrims on landing picked up scallop shells on the beach and wore them as signs of their pilgrimage. The pilgrim's staff with the gourd (water vessel) and the scallop shell are consequently the emblems of St.

James and are seen on the shield mounted on the southern corner of the organ loft screen. The scallop shell also features on the kneelers made by the ladies of Longdon to mark Queen Elizabeth's Silver Jubilee in 1977.

St. James is also the patron saint of horses and their riders. The St. James wort is his "flower" and its yellow flowers can be seen around the time of his festival on 25th July.



The Lych Gate

This provides the entrance to the church from the south-west. The gate was built by local village craftsmen to commemorate the diamond jubilee of Queen Victoria in June 1897.

The Organ Screen

Made of oak and erected in 1903, the screen is the work of Robert Bridgeman and Son of Lichfield. The shield mounted to the left of the central door in the screen carries the arms of St Chad and Lichfield (2). The shield to the right of the door carries the

arms of the province of Canterbury (3). The shields in the corners of the screen symbolise St. James (1) and St. George (4).



(1)

(2)

(3)

(4)

The Church Bells

Until 1999, the tower contained a ring of five bells mounted in a wooden “lowside” frame. The bells were all cast by Abraham Rudhall of Gloucester in 1727 and were re-hung and quarter-turned in 1935. The ringing chamber is unusual in that it is a ringing gallery surrounding the central staircase. Above the ringing chamber are two other chambers, an intermediate sound deadening chamber and the belfry which is level with the louvres which can be seen on the outside of the tower. The treble weighs just over 5 cwt and the tenor bell weighs approximately 12 cwt.. Because the bell frame was in a dangerous state, it was replaced in 1999 and a sixth bell added.



The Organ and Loft

Infamous for its association with church music, the organ continues to fulfil a vital role in accompanying, and enhancing, the worship and praise of God which takes place here regularly.

The present pipe organ was either rebuilt or replaced completely in 1903 by Nicholson and Lord, of Walsall. Prior to 1933 (when electricity came to the village) the air for the organ was supplied by hand-operated bellows which have been recently found to be not working.

The organ loft gallery, which has seating for the choir, also offers an excellent overview of the nave.

The Chancel and Sanctuary

The chancel and the sanctuary continue to serve as places for worship and prayer.

Prior to the alterations in 1985/86, Holy Communion was always celebrated by the priest standing behind the high altar, and the chancel contained stalls from which the choir led the congregational hymns. Today, these areas are used for the weekly traditional (said) service of Holy Communion, as well as for events like Messy Church and for private prayer throughout the week.

The chancel was built almost a century after the Nave in about 1250, and the sanctuary later still, in the early part of the 14th century. The altar rail was the gift of the Longdon parish Sunday School

in 1904. The ornamental oak screen behind the altar is called a reredos and was erected in 1934 in memory of Emily Frances Bygott who was the wife of Rev. John Parkinson Bygott, vicar between 1905 and 1940. The ceiling in the chancel is mainly Jacobean but it has had some restoration, including having some resident Death Watch beetle eradicated. The floors in the chancel and sanctuary were re-laid during alterations in 1985/86.



The Rood Stairway

Still clearly visible is the lower half of a stairway which, in medieval times, gave access to the rood loft (or Gallery), where the choir and musicians were located. This gallery was situated across the arch itself and was supported by a large beam, to which was fastened the rood or crucifix.





The Hagioscope

The remains of a 'Squint', now blocked-up, are still clearly visible. More technically described as a 'Hagioscope', the purpose of this angled 'hole through the wall' was to allow an officiating priest in the private chapel to see the sanctuary area in an unobtrusive manner, so that he could synchronise the consecration of the bread and wine with the actions of the parish priest as he presided from behind the high altar.

The Porch

The inner door of the south porch is surmounted by a Norman arch. The capitals are crudely carved, the right-hand capital has the head of the "Green Man" included. Lower down on the wall forming the right-hand side of the doorway can be seen the inscribed "Bride's Hand". This hand with a heart in the palm should traditionally be touched by brides entering the church on their wedding day in order to bring good fortune and fertility to the marriage. *(Picture is enhanced to show the hand more clearly.)*



On the east wall of the porch are the charity boards which list ancient charitable endowments. These charities were abolished by order of the Charity Commission in 1886. They were then embodied with other gifts and bequests in a scheme for parochial charities.

The Lectern

The 'Angel Lectern' was formerly located in the nave (near the arch) prior to 1985, and served for many years as the place from which the Holy Scriptures were read aloud in public worship. The lectern is made of oak and is another outstanding piece of craftsmanship by Robert Bridgeman and Son. It was the gift of a former vicar of the parish, Rev J.H. Crump in 1899. With the introduction of the nave altar in 1986, a new lectern which is less heavy and more mobile was put into use in the nave.



The Stonywell Chapel

This chapel on the south side of the church is also known by five other names: Trinity chapel, Lady chapel, South chapel, Hanch chapel and The Chantry.

Originally on this site stood a chantry which was built in 1309 by Richard de Valys - "priest of Lichfield". The chantry was replaced in 1520 by

John Stonywell who was born at Stonywell, a village near Longdon and as a youth was taken to a monastery in Pershore, Worcestershire where he became a Benedictine monk.

In later life John Stonywell became prior of Gloucester College, Oxford, Lord Abbot of Pershore Monastery and a bishop. After the dissolution of the monasteries in 1539 it is assumed that Bishop John returned to Longdon and when he died in 1553 he was buried, as requested in his will, in the chapel within St James' Church, Longdon. His grave slab has the arms and mitre of a bishop together with the ravens symbolising St Benedict inscribed on it. Now in poor condition, it is under a specially made cover within the new flooring.

The chapel is built in the perpendicular style with two arches supported on an octagonal pillar separating it from the nave. A carved Madonna's head is located in the spring of the arches. The ceiling is oak and apart from minor repairs is original, dating back to the early 16th century. The oak screening in the behind the altar is Jacobean and used to be in the western-most arch of this chapel.



Between 1520 and 1944 the chapel was a private chapel separate from the parish church. After the passing of the Stonywell family the chapel was associated with several families, the most notable being the Ormes and the Forsters. Memorials to members of these families are located in the chapel and, as previously described, in the north transept. The Forster family had burial vaults constructed under the chapel - access can now only be gained by digging in from outside under the east wall. In 1944 following the death of Col. R.E. Negus of Hanch Hall the "ownership" of the chapel formally transferred to the Church. In 1947 it was decided to dedicate the chapel as a memorial to the Longdon men that had been killed in the 1939/45 War.

The chapel is still in daily use, set aside as a place for private prayer and meditation. Thanks to a generous legacy from Mrs. Maureen Piper, we have been able to refurbish this area and also protect three grave stones from further foot rubbing.

If you have read this with a view to visiting the church, we very much look forward to welcoming you. If you are able to join us on a Sunday for worship, please make yourself known to us and join us for coffee and biscuits after the service.

Thank you for your interest.