

St. Chad's Church,



Stockton

A Brief Guide

What to look for



Items of interest inside the church include

the Elizabethan communion table,

the Jacobean carved pulpit,

the barrel roof of the nave

and the carved oak ceiling of the chancel.

The font is Perpendicular in style and is one of the best features.

In the chancel on the south side is a square headed recess, described as a leper window (also seen from outside the church)

The west window was given in memory of W. O. Foster.

The reading desk was given in memory of Prebendary Hyatt, vicar of the parish who died in 1940.

Outside the church look for

The Whitmore Family Vault

The 18th Century sundial

The Churchyard

In the old churchyard on the south side (turn left on exit) is the Whitmore family vault under the church and memorial stones

There is also an old sundial made in 1717 which stands on an eroded sandstone column. The sundial has an inner arc of Roman numerals for noon - XII – representing the time of noon at various places. Only two names are now decipherable: Port Royal (Jamaica) and Constantinople.

The tall memorial cross is probably in memory of the Whitmores.

The church continues to be a place of regular worship on Sundays with communion at the altar, bible readings at the lectern and hymns of praise accompanied by the organ.

As well as church festivals in the year there are also the more personal family occasions of baptisms, weddings and funerals. Church buildings have traditionally been special places for local people and visitors and even if less so now in the 21st century the symbols and atmosphere of a church can remind people of God and his good purposes for us and his creation through Jesus Christ.

Details of current events and services are on the notice board outside the church, and also in the monthly newsletter

We hope you have enjoyed your visit

www.churches.lichfield.anglican.org/shifnal/beckbury

St Chad

This church building is dedicated to Chad, the first Bishop of Lichfield. Although there were Bishops of Mercia before Chad, in 669 AD he brought the gospel message of salvation to the people of what was then called "Mercia", baptizing converts in the pool at Lichfield. In those days the Diocese was much larger than it now is, stretching from the Scottish border in the north to Bristol in the south. Chad covered the Diocese on foot, until the then Archbishop of Canterbury apparently insisted that he use a more modern form of transport and made him ride a horse!

History of Stockton

The name '*Stockton*' means '*the town of the wood*'. In the Domesday Book of 1085 it is called *Stochetone*. The village of Norton lies to the north of the church (hence its name), and has become a separate community with its own identity although it is part of Stockton parish. Little is known about the origins of Stockton Church.

The Parish of Stockton was granted by William the Conqueror to the De Lucy (or De Laci) family whose title was Baron de Higford according to the Domesday book. Higford is now a very small hamlet to the east of Stockton but its manor in 1284 included the villages of Stockton, Norton and Apley.

The Parish Church was the focal point so we can assume the Lucy family were the original founders in the late 11th century, building in what was then the new Norman style

The Parish Registers, now kept at Shrewsbury, date back to Queen Elizabeth 1, and in her reign the Whitmore family bought Stockton Parish from the Lucys with the right to appoint its vicar. In those days the population round the Church must have been considerable and on the map of 1613 it is shown as Stockton Town.

Recent Developments

The Foster Family bought Apley Estate from the Whitmores in 1869 and became patrons of Stockton Church with the right to appoint the vicar. The beautiful West window was given in memory of Mr.W.O.Foster whose grave is marked by a celtic cross in the church yard next to the sundial. The estate then passed to the Gouldburns, and on the death of Brigadier Cuthbert Goulburn in 1991 without family, the estate passed to the Hamiltons who are now the church patrons. Apley Hall has been converted into apartments. Both the houses neighbouring the church used to be rectories before the parish was linked to other local parishes. Other houses that used to stand in Stockton have been demolished since the beginning of the 20th century, so the community of Stockton is now much smaller than it was.

In 1974, the parish of Stockton was linked with the neighbouring parishes of Sutton Maddock and Kemberton, and in 1989 these three parishes were linked with the parishes of Badger, Beckbury and Ryton making a new group of six parishes.

The Church Building

The earliest work in the church was Norman, possibly of the 11th Century. The nave and chancel were built at this time, and there are Norman windows on the north and south sides of the chancel, and a semi-circular-headed doorway in the south; the former buttresses on the south of the nave also had a Norman appearance.

Additions seem to have been made in the 14th Century decorated period, one traceried window in that style being on the south side of the Chancel. The tower would appear to have been built in the 15th Century, but the upper part rebuilt in the 17th; and at this late period battlements were placed along the nave walls, and windows inserted in the nave and the east wall of the chancel. A porch existed on the west side of the tower.

The present church building looks more recent than this because the walls were refaced internally and externally. In the south wall of the chancel there is a piscina, aumbry, and sedilia (wash basin, recess and stone seats) The originals existed in 1857 when the floor was lower before the restoration. They were refaced in new stone with imitation Norman dog-tooth design The Norman window opposite was retained, and an inscription about the restoration laid in the sill. Another window was relocated when the organ was built. There is a narrow-square-headed window in the south wall, described as a "leper window", which can also be seen from outside. It is probably from the 14th Century, when those who could not come into the church could still see the consecration of the bread and wine at the communion service

The roof of the chancel has carved panelling This roof was raised a few feet when the work was done in 1858 by the Whitmores

Above the two doors are memorials to two of the Whitmores. The chancel arch and most of the windows in the chancel and nave are modern. The nave has very small transepts on either side, with monuments to the Fosters and the Gouldburns of Apley Hall, and also to two previous vicars. Some beautiful Jacobean carving, with designs of fruit and flowers, was worked into the pulpit and reading-desk; the frescoes, altered to their present form, are probably of the same date. There is a fine example of a wagon (or barrel) roof overhead in the nave. The font is also a good example of the 15th Century perpendicular style of church architecture. It is panelled, with a variety of leaves and flowers.

The tower was evidently built at two different periods, as the character of the masonry outside shows. The later part is about one third of the whole, and is built of a poorer stone than the earlier The upper part has perpendicular windows and may well have been built in the 17th century. It was probably a rebuilding, and not an addition to the church, because the old stone in the supporting buttresses goes up to the same height as the old stone in the walls. Buttresses do not generally go up to the very top of a tower, and so it is probable that the old tower here was considerably taller than the present height of the old stone.

The west window is Victorian, and the original outer porch has gone.

Three of the six bells in the tall tower date back to the 17th century. The tenor bell has an inscription, which supplies evidence that Sir William Whitmore died before 1651 and was responsible for the restoration of the church including :

the upper part of the tower, the carved work on the pulpit and reading-desk, the nave roof and pews, the windows, and the battlements which were removed in the first half of the 20th century.

In 1968 the parapet walls to the chancel were removed and the roof restored to its original design so that it now continues over the walls and avoids any concealed gutters and risk of leaks.

The Whitmore family also did another major reconstruction of the church between 1858 and 1860. The oak ceiling to the chancel was raised about two feet and the walls cased in with new stone both outside and inside. The chancel arch was renewed and most of the windows formed in Gothic style. Unfortunately, the outside stone was local soft red sandstone which does not weather well.

Following the Victorian fashion in architecture, they created parapet walls with concealed guttering behind. One hundred years later this guttering became defective with water seeping into the chancel walls. So the parapets had to be removed in 1968 and the tiled roof stripped and extended so as to cover the walls with a proper overhang. The nave roof remains in that Victorian style with carved stone gargoyles (taking the gutter water away from the walls)

The external walls of the Nave were also cased in the same red sandstone by the Whitmores in 1858. The Tower appears to have been built in the 15th Century, and the upper part rebuilt later. The stone is better quality than the red sandstone, but has still needed extensive repair.