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DISCOVERING....

Devon's Historic Churches



Parish Church of
St Andrew Colyton

February 2023

St. Andrews. Colyton



The church is reputedly haunted by a lady in grey who turns her head away from those who look at her, either in modesty or shame. In addition, by the nearby rivers, the spirit of a girl stands on the bank and stares longingly into the waters. Described by the many that have seen her as being startlingly attractive, no-one seems to know who she may be but some believe her to be the ancient pagan goddess of the waters, worshipped in roman times. Down the road at Shute Barton one former resident still walks the gardens as a grey lady. Her identity is for debate with some claiming it to be the ghost of Lady Jane Grey, the so-called 'nine-day Queen'. Others, however, say it is one of the descendants, Lady de la Pole, who was hanged in the garden for being a Royalist during the Civil War. Witnesses have described her as having a determined face and that she walks about 'as if she owns the place'. which, at one stage, she probably did! (Taken from the *Midweek Herald*, 29th October 2017)

The tower was originally built as a standard square tower. The octagonal lantern was added just before the reformation brought church building to a halt and was inspired by the tower of Bruges Town Hall. This would have been familiar to people as both towns were important centres for the wool trade.



The weathercock is made of copper, is 4ft 6in long and weighs 70.1lbs. When overhauled in 1990 it was found to be stamped with the date 1852 and to contain an 1893 copy of Pulman's Weekly News

Inside the Church

Saxon Cross



The cross has been dated between 900 and 1000 AD and was discovered as a result of a major fire in 1933. The fire destroyed the roofs of the south aisle and the nave, The cross was discovered in three parts used as building material and built into the west face of the tower. The stone at the foot of the cross was believed to be part of it, but no-one could work out where it went!

The chandeliers

The two chandeliers were purchased in 1796 for £82 and hold 36 candles each, They are still used on special occasions such as the annual carol service.

The wooden crucifix behind was carved in Oberammergau and erected in 1935 as a memorial to the Rev Harry Francis Gueritz.



Stained glass windows

The west window is one of the largest in any parish church in the country. The stone tracery was replaced in the early 20th Century and the original was returned to Beer Quarry where it can be seen in their museum. The glass shows Christ in Majesty surrounded by angels, the apostles and scenes from the life of St, Andrew. Each saint has a unique halo.



The Pulpit



The stone pulpit, which is unusually decorative, was carved by A. Norman who also carved the font around 1886. The pulpit actually dates from 1897 when it replaced an earlier three-decker one which was situated at the west end of the nave. This, rather than the altar, would have been the focal point of most services and would explain why the early box pews were facing away from the altar.



The Chime Barrel



The early 1700s chime barrel is on show in the Pole chapel. By a series of wires and cranks, and the teeth on the barrel, one man was able to ring all six bells in sequence. It has now been replaced by a new electric version.

Courtenay family

During the middle ages the Courtenays were the richest and most powerful family in Devon, with one branch living at Colyton Castle. It was a seat of the Courtenay family, Earls of Devon, whose principal seat was Tiverton Castle, It was used as his seat by Thomas de Courtenay, 5th Earl of Devon while his widowed mother occupied Tiverton Castle as her dower house. Its position near to Shute, the seat of William Bonville, 1st Baron Bonville (1392–1461), the arch-enemy of the 5th Earl, led to some serious territorial battles between the two families, culminating in the Battle of Clyst Heath of 1455.



This was thought to be the tomb of Margaret (d 1512), daughter of William Courtenay and his wife Catherine, the daughter of Edward IV. She was reputed to have died as a result of choking on a fishbone. However, closer examination of the coats of arms suggested that it was the tomb of Margaret Beaumont, grand-daughter of John of Gaunt, who married Thomas Courtenay, fifth earl of Devon in 1431. She died in 1439.



Pole family

The Pole family lived at Shute and were the largest landowners in area. The Pole Chapel contains a number of interesting items including an elaborate monument to Sir John Pole (d. 1658) and his wife Elizabeth (d. 1628).



Most unusually the figures lie back to back on their sides under a highly decorative Corinthian canopy. The knight is dressed in full armour, and the lady in cap and farthingale.



This monument is to Mary Pole, wife of William Pole MP who she married in 1583 in Shobrook. She died in 1605 aged only 38 and yet married for 22 years. She was survived by 9 of her 12 children, four sons and 5 daughters. It depicts her kneeling behind her 4 surviving sons and in front of her 5 surviving daughters. William was buried in what is now the Pole chapel, marked by a simple ledger stone, with a well worn inscription

The fourth Pole monument dates to 1587 and includes the Pole family motto "Pollet Virtvs". The family crest is carved on the foot of the tomb.



Yonge family

The current Lady Chapel was once the private chapel of the Yonge family with the vault below being used as a family tomb. The family came to Colyton in the reign of Elizabeth I and their coat of arms can be seen on the Jacobean stone screen. In the 19th century the Chapel was enclosed and used as a place for Vestry meetings. During one crowded session in 1844 the floor gave way and several people ended up in the vault below!

Some of the stained glass in the window may date back to medieval times,



Mamerto Gueritz

Mamerto Gueritz was rector of Colyton from 1859-1901. He was the son of an officer in the Royal Walloon Guards who became a political refugee from Spain. During his incumbancy the nave aisles galleries were taken down and the whole church was re-roofed. He died in 1912 aged 89.



Gueritz had two major confrontations with his parishoners early on in his incumbancy. First of all in 1863 he refused to marry his parishoners during Lent and when the wedding of the Prince of wales took place he wrote to the Queen to protest at the bad exam[ple being set to the nation. The following year he refused to bury one John Pavey alongside his wife as Pavey was a Unitarian and thus in the eyes of

Gueritz not a Christian so not permitted to be buried in consecrated ground. Neither act found favour with the people of Colyton!! (For more detail of the life of this colourful man, see *Jean Robin: The Way we Lived then Ch 3*)

Later in his life he was involved with both a local choir and the education of poor children. Gueritz finally retired in 1901 and the people of Colyton made him a gift of £120.

He spent his last years living with his widowed daughter and died in 1912 aged 89

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