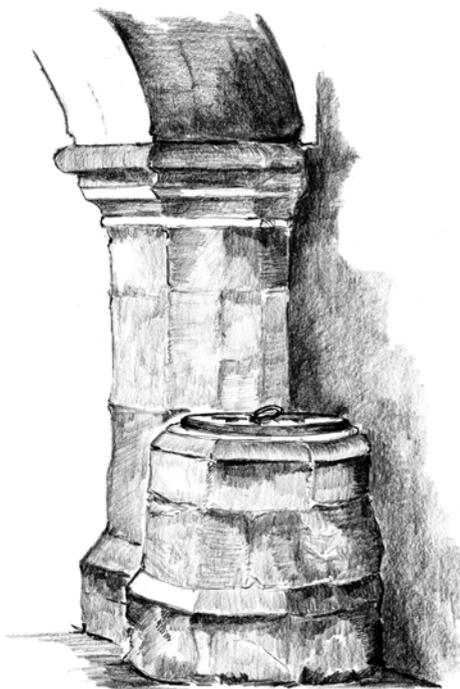


St. Michael and All Angels Church, Berwick - An Historical Guide

As one enters the church one can see through the single window beyond the font the grassy bank of a barrow (mound) which indicates the pre-historic origin of this sacred site. The simple well-like



early Saxon font appears to predate the later 12th Century building around it.

To the right of the font on the lower stones of the tower arch can be seen 14th Century arrow

marks, grooves thought to have been cut by the sharpening of arrows. Archery practice was made compulsory on a Sunday after church by Edward III. The 'Westcatts of Berwick' are on the Rolls of Archers at Agincourt and 'Westgates' still live in the parish.



The tower was built in 1603 and at that time had a spire. The south aisle whose pillar and arches date back to the 14th Century were also restored at this time.

The 17th Century 'Parson Nutt Memorial', (Rector of Berwick 1613-1645) on the north wall in the tower is largely hidden by the organ. He wrote a unique commonplace book 'Remembrances of the Parsons of Berwick'.

Mrs Nutt gave a precious silver gilt chalice and patten as a thank offering for the birth of twins in 1633. The framed list of Rectors in the South Aisle records that 'a

Parliamentarian intruder put in by Cromwell' displaced Nutt at the Reformation (1649-1660) and he withdrew to his private home at Mays, Selmeston. Parson Nutt is buried in a vault before the altar.

Still recovering from the Reformation in the 17th and 18th Centuries the church suffered from neglect.



The 18th Century watercolour (above) shows the east-end of the church was shortened and the roof thatched. The spire, which was destroyed by lightning on Aug 8th, 1773 is missing. There is no north aisle as it had been demolished in 1743. Debts on the building must have been heavy as a Church Rate was made in 1777.

The selling of three of four bells (one bell dated 1629 was re-hung) led to the saying 'The Parson poor and so was the people, so they sold the bells to repair the steeple'.

Later a small tolling-in bell, inscribed 1781, was purchased from a ship-wreck in 1811.

Revd E. Boys-Ellman and the Victorian Restoration

Revd E. Boys-Ellman was Curate of Berwick 1837-1843 and Rector 1846-1906, a ministry of a remarkable 66 years. He studied at Oxford where he was taught by the founders of the 'Oxford Movement', a Movement which restored Catholic elements to Anglican worship such as the importance of symbols, beauty, colour and the sacraments.



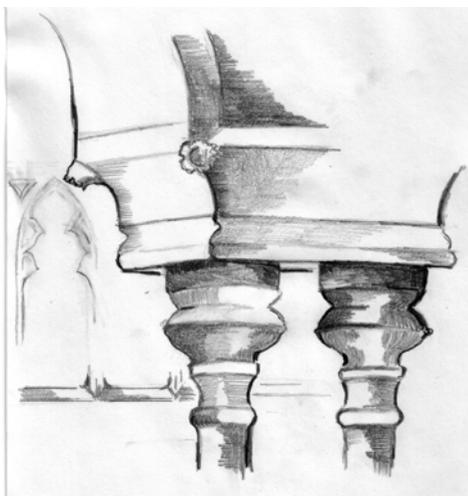
Revd Boys-Ellman is known for his book 'Recollections of a Sussex Parson', a remarkable account of his era. He described parts of the church as a 'rabbit warren' on his arrival.

He built a new Rectory (1846) (adjacent to the church), a school (1854) (the flint building at the mini roundabout just down the lane), and also undertook the

restoration of the church to designs by the local Victorian architect, Henry Woodyer.

A Church Rate with special intent for the restoration was made for three years and the Diocese and friends contributed. The building was completed in 1857.

In the rebuilding of the north aisle Woodyer designed the innovative, 'north arcade couple shaft (below)'. The east end of the church was extended and completely rebuilt.



At the time of the Victorian restoration, timbers from the roof were used to make the chancel screen and a new altar. The screen was painted in the 20th Century as part of the mural project.

The altar steps are made from the old Sussex marble altar that was probably dismantled at the Reformation and found in the chancel floor. The stone has also been incorporated into the back of

the Sedilia (the double seat to the right of the altar) and the 14th Century Easter Sepulchre (below).



The east end was rebuilt and extended. The beautifully carved Sepulchre (to the left of the altar) was discovered in pieces in the churchyard and reincorporated during the reconstruction. The cross at its top was probably the old external cross at the east end of the roof.

The Easter Sepulchre represents the tomb in which Jesus was buried and was used to retell the story of the resurrection. Consecrated bread was wrapped in white linen and placed there on Good Friday with a cross. Early on

Easter morning only the clothes would remain. Parishioners coming to the Sepulchre would be met by the Priest dressed in white and be asked 'Whom seek ye?'. When they answered 'Jesus of Nazareth' the priest would respond 'He is not here: He is risen! Come, see the place where Jesus lay'. And going to the Sepulchre and seeing linen cloths they would exclaim 'Alleluia! The Lord is risen indeed, Alleluia!' and worship would begin.