

Holy Trinity Tibberton

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HOLY TRINITY CHURCH

TIBBERTON

This short leaflet is not intended to be a complete guide to the history of this lovely little church, but has been written to tell visitors about a few of the points of interest. Indeed, it would be very difficult to provide an exhaustive history since very few early records exist; any that were kept before the mid-seventeenth century must have been destroyed.

There is, however, an unbroken record of the names of the Rectors from 1283, the first being a certain "Sir R of Cumerwell or Cumberwell", who was inducted by the Bishop of Hereford on the 28th March, 1283. The patron of the Benefice at that time was "Edmund, son of the king". The patronage of the Benefice has changed many times. At one period it had the doubtful distinction of being in the gift of King Henry VIII. Later, however, it was the gift of his daughter, Elizabeth I, "Good Queen Bess".

The village of Tibberton is recorded in the Domesday Book:-
"Ulfelin held Tebriston in Botelau hundred, in the reign of King Edward the Confessor; William son of Baderon held it in the reign of King William the Conqueror".

It was taxed in 5 hides, there were 11 plough tillages, whereof 3 were in demean; there was a wood 4 miles long

and 1 mile broad belonging to it. It paid a yearly rent of 68s 10d in King Edward's reign; it paid 100s yearly in King William's reign.

This indicates that at some earlier time the place had belonged to a man called "Tebri" and had been Tebri's Town perhaps in early Saxon days. In William the Conqueror's reign the village, then in the hundred of "Botelau" or Botloe, was under the jurisdiction of "William son of Baderon". Much later in the reign of Edward III, Tibberton, by this time called Tiberton, was part of the estate of the Dukes of Lancaster and passed to John of Gaunt, second son of Edward III, on his first marriage to Blanche, daughter of the preceeding Duke of Lancaster. Thereafter it, together with all the other Lancastrian estates, became detached from the Botloe Hundred and became part of the Hundred of the Duchy of Lancaster.

The Domesday Book makes no mention of a church here, but the building itself tells us that a lot of it dates back to at least Norman times. A walk around the outside reveals some excellent examples of "Herringbone" masonry, typical of the late Saxon and early Norman period, in the north walls of both the nave and the chancel and also in the south wall of the nave.



*herringbone
stonework*

The date of the original church is not known but when restoration work was carried out in 1961 Saxon foundations were exposed. The original church therefore probably consisted of the nave in much the same shape as it is today, with a short chancel possibly ending in a semi-circular apse typical of many eleventh and twelfth century churches. The eastern end of the chancel as we see it today was added in the Early English period of architecture. The tower at the west end is considered to be thirteenth century in origin and may once have been shorter than at present; the upper stonework could be later than that of the base. An early eighteenth century historian made special mention of the tower roof being covered with tiles which was then unusual. The entrance porch was added after the original building, but not a great time afterwards. It's stonework is very similar to that of the tower and is weathered almost as much.

The inside of the church is best described by starting at the east end with the east window. This consisted of two narrow lights in the Early English tradition until 1910, when it was desired to provide a memorial to the life and work of Honeywood Dobyns Yate Scott, Rector of the parish for 56 years from 1852 until his death in 1908. The window was then altered to its present form with a centre light flanked by slightly shorter ones on either side. The stained glass, depicting Christ and two Angels, is simple and dignified, and is fairly typical of the work of the early twentieth century.

The chancel has an interesting low ceiling of Jacobean oak which was unfortunately plastered and whitewashed in the early nineteenth century. An extensive restoration of the church took place in 1908 when the whitewash was removed and, where necessary, panels and oak bosses at the intersections of beams were replaced. It says a lot for the skill and ability of the restorers that it is now difficult to distinguish at a casual glance which pieces are original and which are later additions. Two of the oak bosses still contain a hook for oil lamps or candelabra.

The church probably had no windows when originally built. The two windows on the south side of the chancel were inserted early in the life of the building. The Norman period of architecture often has narrow windows with splayed internal walls, as here. The object was to keep out the weather whilst admitting as much light as possible. The openings would have originally been left open or covered by timber shutters or oiled linen sheets. The glazing is a later alteration. The remaining windows in the church are a later addition.

In the chancel, three memorial tablets hint at a story which links this deeply rural part of Gloucestershire with the exotic West Indies island of Antigua. The earliest of the three inscriptions tells of the fate that befell Francis Donovan of Tibberton Court whilst in his prime.

It records that "he died on January 30th, 1811, in the 29th year of his age on a voyage to Antigua in the service of affection and was buried in the unfathomable depths of the ocean".

Five years later, fate strikes again at the Donovans, this time at Richard, probably an older brother of Francis, whose memorial reads; "The imperious command of parental duty urged him to visit Antigua. On July 11th, 1816, he fell a victim to the Yellow Fever, aged 43, and his body is buried in the family vault on his own estate in that island".

Three years later his wife "died of a deep decline".

The third tablet was installed by Caroline Anne, Richard's daughter, and it commemorates Mr Richard Williams, who was for a long time in the service of Richard Donovan.

Caroline's tribute to the family servant runs; "He executed with unswerving integrity the duties of an important mission in a far distant land, and returned to claim the undying affection and respect of every member of the family".

Richard Williams died at Gloucester in 1832, aged 56.

Are these the elements of a successful film scenario - the ill-fated country squires with a suggestion of mystery in their West Indian associations; the daughter who, maybe,

cannot rest until some problem is solved, some wrong righted; the faithful retainer who vindicates the family, puts it on its feet again? Who knows?

The piscina is not original and it is not known when the present one was installed. Much work in the church has been changed during its long life, often during restorations.

The organ was installed in 1903 and is cleverly set into a recess in the external wall.

The arch separating the chancel from the nave was plastered early in the nineteenth century. This plaster was removed in 1807 to reveal rude stonework which is probably Saxon. The design and shape are considered rather too rough to be the work of Norman builders.

The nave has been little altered since it was built. There are traces of both north and south doorways in the external stonework but these are not visible on the inside because of plaster overlying the stone walls. The lofty arch between the nave and tower is Norman.

The nave has a very simple plastered vaulted roof.

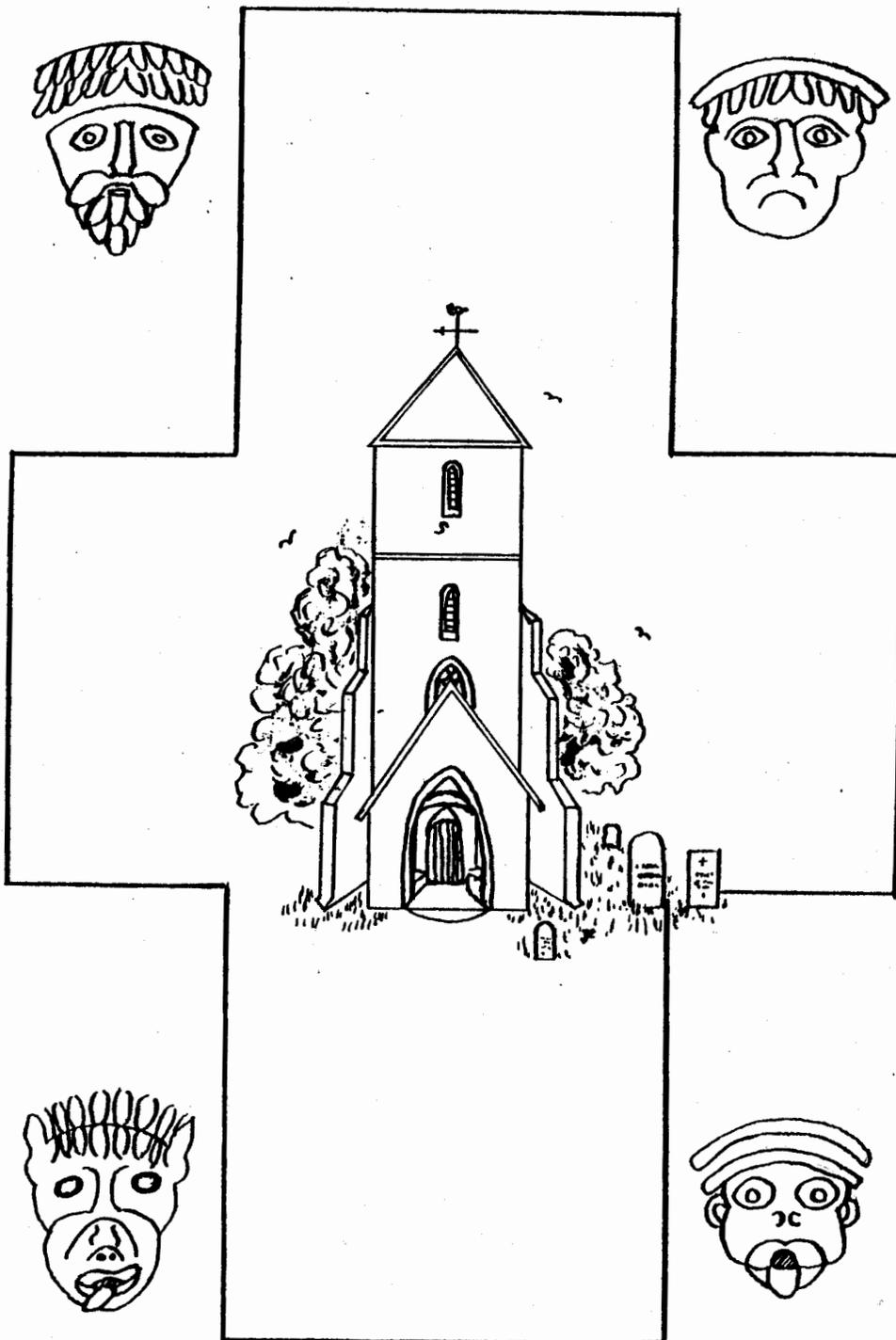
The present font was installed in 1920 and is a thank-offering for the survivors of the First War. The old font is thought to have vanished at a date when the north and south doorways were blocked up and an entrance with a

porch constructed on the west side of the tower.

The tower once had a stone vault over its lowest stage as can be seen from the four corbels which still remain. These are each carved differently, two have grotesque heads while the other two may well be portraits. This vault was evidently taken down to provide access to the upper stages for bells, and the wooden ceiling which now replaces it has a central removable section for this purpose.

Although there is no conclusive evidence, the tower may once have been used by the villagers as a safe refuge from raiders. There are many castles along the Welsh border region and much local skirmishing took place before peace came to this area in the thirteenth century. Tibberton was once surrounded by forest - an extension of the Forest of Dean - and the church tower could have possibly been used as a watchtower.

At one time there were three bells. The smallest was cast before the Reformation while the other two were dated 1631 and 1641 respectively. During the 1908 restoration the 1641 bell was re-cast by Messrs John Taylor and Company of Loughborough, and re-hung in a new iron frame together with the 1631 bell. The frame was constructed with spaces for three bells but there is no written record of what happened to the smallest one. It has been suggested that it could have been cracked and so was melted down with the 1641 bell to provide enough metal for a larger, deeper toned bell.



Very few pre-Reformation bells exist, and, had it been preserved, it would have become one of the church's most valuable possessions.

The two notices in the tower make interesting reading.

The church possess one great treasure in the form of a silver Elizabethan Chalice made in the year 1575, thirteen years before the Spanish Armada. The chalice is kept in a bank and is only used for special occasions.

In 1908 the tower floorings and roof were renewed and the stonework of the whole church was re-pointed both inside and out. The foundations were underpinned where necessary and the drainage was improved. A new heating system was installed, operated by a solid fuel boiler under the north-east corner of the nave, which heated water in pipes and provided hot air through grilles in the floor. This system has been replaced in recent years by electrical tubular heaters under each pew which are very effective in a church of this size.

Externally, the arch over the door on the north side of the chancel shows signs of having been altered. On the south side of the nave, near the tower, is the remains of a hinge, though no plans exist of the layout of the churchyard to show why a gate was installed there. The entrance to the porch also shows signs of having been altered.

The graveyard is typical of many church yards. On the South side lie a number of impressive tombs, dating from the nineteenth century. Once it was the custom for suicides, stillborn, unbaptised and illegitimate children to be buried on the north side. Hence all the tombs are on the south side.

In one corner of the churchyard is a vault for a local family who still reside in the area. The hour glass depicted in the stained glass window shows that the time for life has ended.

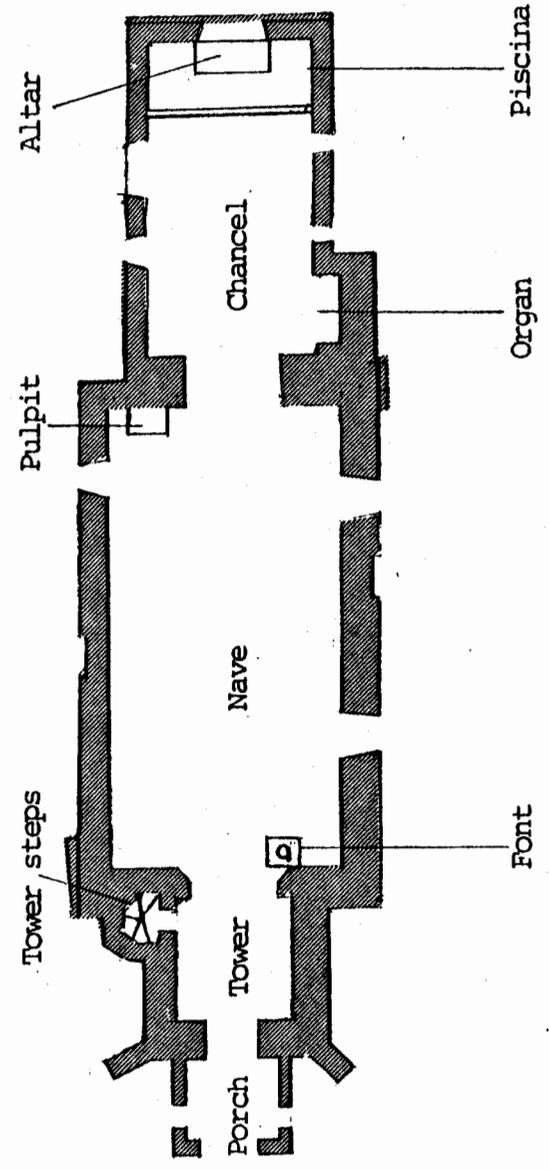
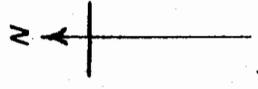
The church room at the church gate entrance on the road was built at a cost of approximately £500 in 1908 by Mr Charles Teague of Tibberton on land given by Mr M.P.Price. The building was dedicated by Dr E.C. Sumner Gibson who was the Bishop of Gloucester at that time, for "the instruction of the young in accordance with the doctrines of the Church of England for the moral and spiritual good of the parish".

The building served as a Sunday school but it is now used as a play school and as a meeting place for various activities and functions in a thriving village community.

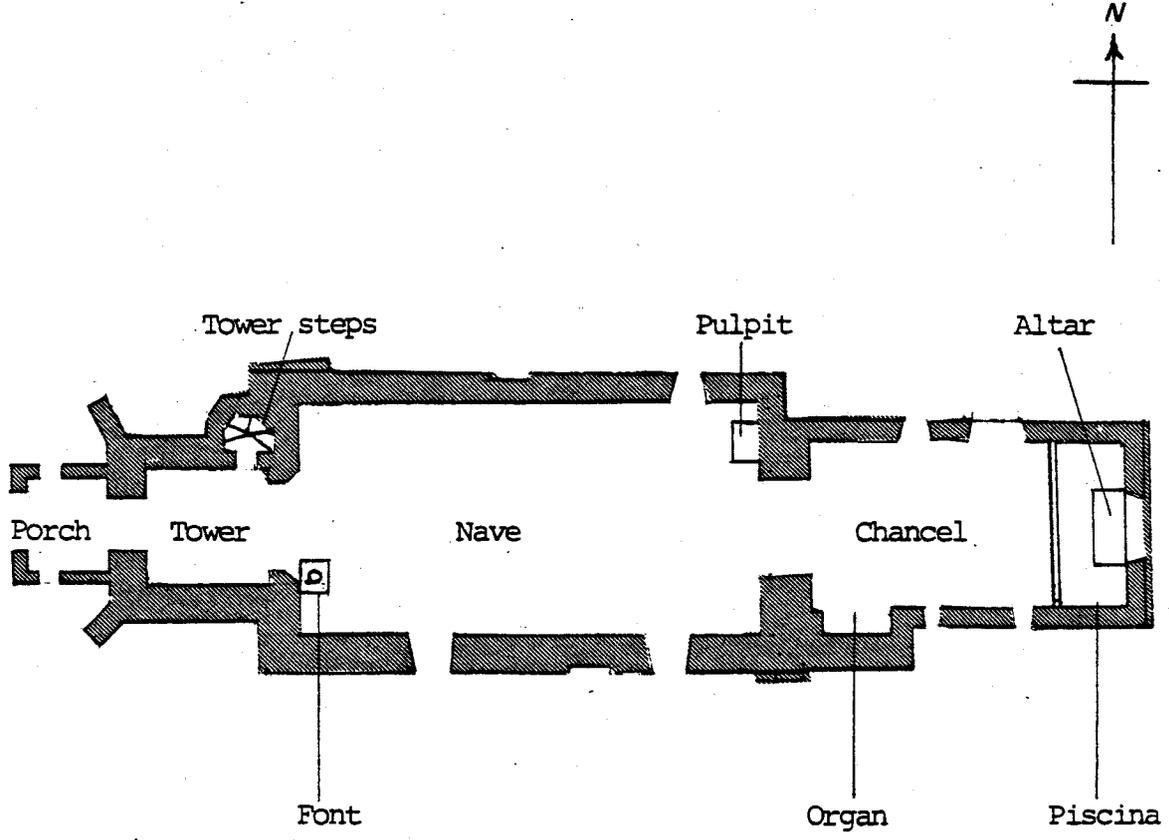
We hope that you have enjoyed your visit to our Church and that you have been able to sense the history of generations of people who have worshipped here for nigh on eight hundred years. Please say a quiet prayer before you leave for the work of this Church in the parish today. Thank you.

Glossary of terms
used in this leaflet

Apse	Semi-circular recess at the east end of a Church.
Chalice	A wine cup or goblet used for Communion.
Chancel	The east part of the Church containing the altar.
Corbel	Stone projection from a wall acting as a support for a superimposed load (e.g. from a ceiling).
Early English	A period of architecture from 12th to 13th Century.
Hundred	Division of a County into smaller areas.
Nave	The main part of the Church.
Piscina	Stone basin near the altar, used for cleaning the Communion chalice and plate.
Saxon	Period of architecture from the 7th to 12th centuries.
Vault	Arched roof.



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