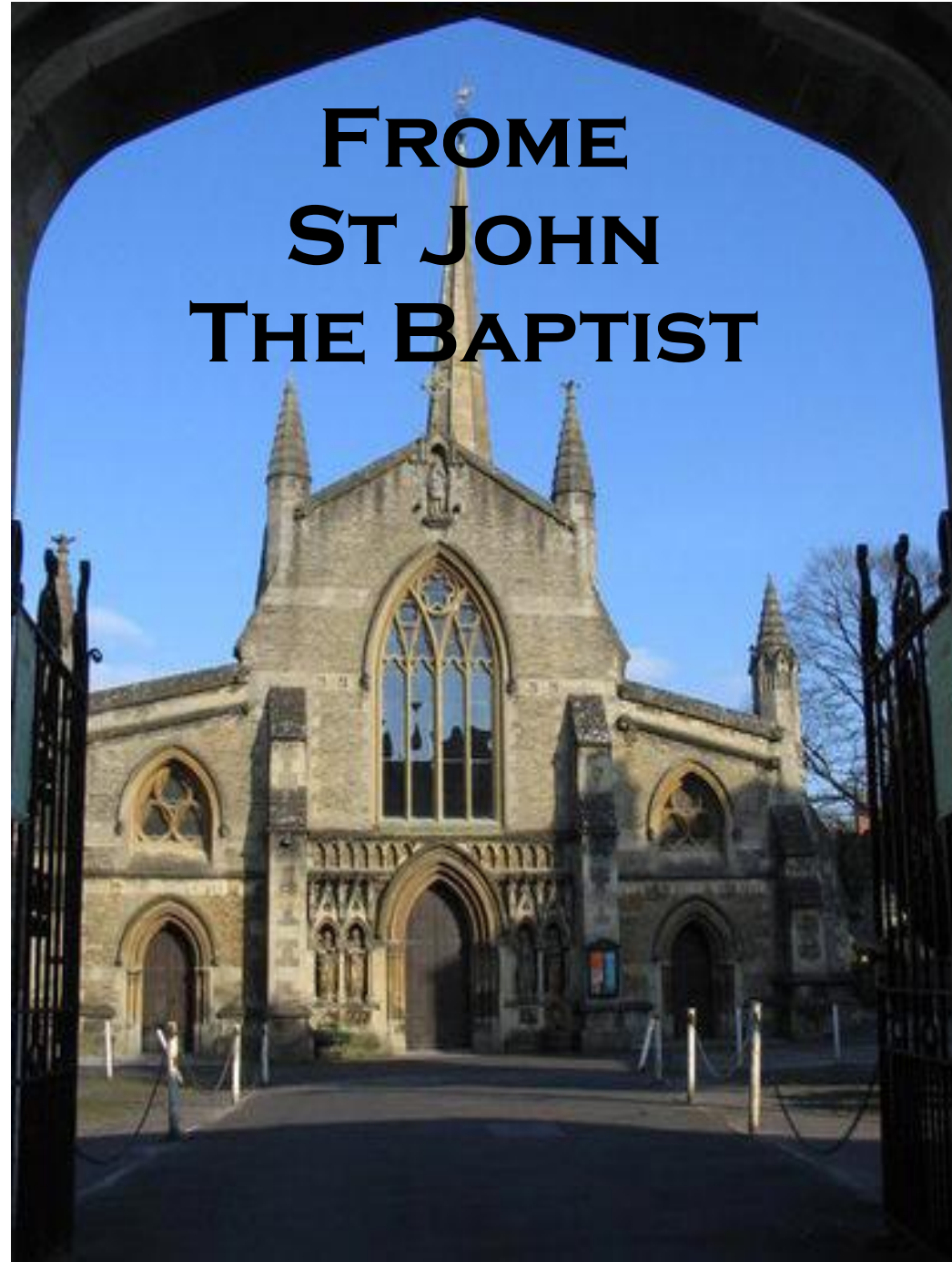


**FROME
ST JOHN
THE BAPTIST**



FROME ST JOHN THE BAPTIST HISTORY

- 685 St Aldhelm establishes a small mission church at a crossing point in the River Frome.
- 701 The Pope gives the monks at Frome (and at the other monasteries founded by St Aldhelm at Bradford-on-Avon and Sherborne) the right to chose their own Abbot. This charter is the earliest surviving document referring to Frome. The monastery at Frome probably fell into disuse once the people in the surrounding area had been converted to Christianity.
- 1066 Both before and after the Norman Conquest the Lord of the Manor of Frome was the King himself and the priest was Reinbald, the Chancellor (effectively Prime Minister) to both Edward the Confessor and William the Conqueror.
- 1125 Church still exists – stone-built (larger than Bradford-on-Avon).
- 1133 Henry I founds Cirencester Abbey and as part of its endowment gives it *'In Froome the church with its lands, and chapels, and tithes, and all other things, as well in the plain as in the forest, pertaining to the said church.'* Cirencester Abbey remains responsible for Frome Church until the Reformation.
- 1170 Monks remodel or replace the Church.
- c1280 About this time, such extensive re-building took place that little was left of the second building. The chancel arch was built and the nave extended as far as the present position of the north and south porches. The aisles were also added.
- c1349 The Lady Chapel is extended – belongs to Vallis Manor.
- 1377 Chantry Chapel of St John's is built (now houses the organ).
- 78 *Chantry chapels were founded by wealthy people so that masses could be said for their souls after their death and the sins of their lives expunged. They were usually well endowed, not only to pay for the maintenance of the chapel but to pay priests to say masses in perpetuity. Protestants did not believe in saying masses for the dead and, in many places, including Frome, the endowments were confiscated and used to found grammar schools.*

Continues on back cover ⇨⇨⇨⇨

INTRODUCTION

In AD 685, St Aldhelm built a small mission church 'in honour of St John the Baptist, on the river which is called Frome'. His purpose: to bring Christianity to the wild and barbaric tribes who inhabited Selwood Forest, and St John's became the 'Light in Selwood' in whose shadow grew the settlement of Frome.

St John's has been at the heart of the community since then. Both the church and town have seen periods of growth, decline and renewal over the centuries, but St John's retains a dominant presence in the town. It is a major architectural and artistic feature of the town, unique in the diversity of its features and loved by many who are not regular worshippers here as well as those who are.

Above all, St John's is a sacred space amid the hurly-burly of twenty-first-century life.

Our mission and ministry:

'Seven whole days, not one in seven'

Cherishing our inheritance of Christian faith and worship,
we strive to welcome all
and share the joy of the Gospel message in Christ,
through concern for the wholeness of individuals
and active involvement in community life in all its diversity.

This guide is laid out much like our Holy Communion Worship book with formal details on the right-hand pages and the 'alternative guide' with archive extracts, anecdotes and lighter material on the left.

A warm welcome to our church. We hope you experience some of the atmosphere of peace and wonder that many have found here down the centuries. In the words of the Blessed Thomas Ken, Bishop of Bath & Wells, who is buried in the churchyard ...

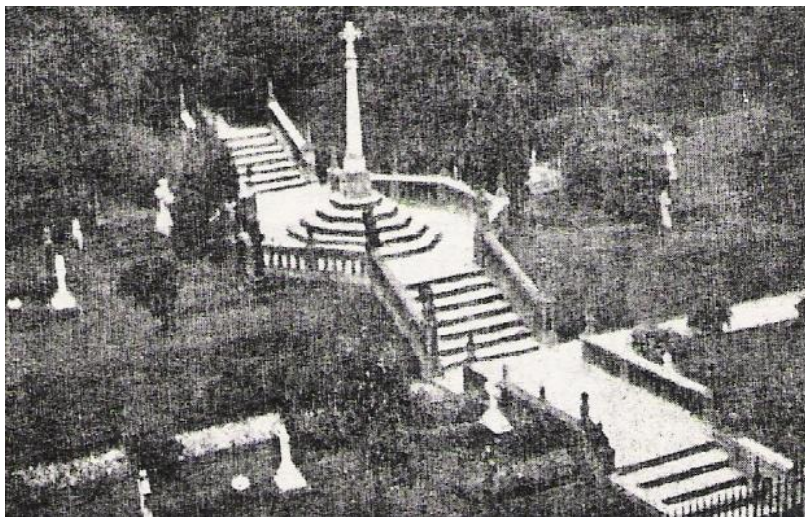
Oh God our heavenly father, make, we pray, the doors of our church wide enough to welcome all in need of human love, and fellowship and a Father's care, yet narrow enough to shut out all envy and pride and lack of love. Here may the tempted find guidance, the sorrowing receive comfort, the wrongdoer be awakened to repentance and the penitent be assured of your mercy. Here may all your children renew their strength and go on their way in hope and joy ...

IMAGES FROM THE ARCHIVES

War Shrine 1917



Bennett Memorial



OUTSIDE

West *Wyattville screen*: The Gothic stone screen dividing the forecourt from Bath Street dates from 1814 when Bath Street was created.

War Memorial: During the First World War a set of boards, known as the War Shrine, was erected in the forecourt, listing those serving in the forces and those who had died. The image opposite shows its unveiling in March 1917. At the end of the War the cruciform War memorial was erected as a permanent reminder.

West front: There are sculptures of the four gospel writers – Matthew, Mark, Luke and John

South *Churchyard* and until recently the *Bennett Memorial*: the workmanship of the memorial, particularly the mosaic paving, was poor – the contractor returned his payment in full. The ravages of time and subsequent vandalism have left the memorial beyond sensible repair.

East *Tomb of Thomas Ken*, Bishop of Bath & Wells.

North *Statue of St Catherine* (Patron Saint of Frome in the Middle Ages) who suffered on the torture-wheel.

Via Crucis, built in 1866.

VIA CRUCIS

The Via Crucis or 'Way of the Cross' was designed and sculpted by James Forsyth, from London (*see photo on back cover*). Erected in 1866, it forms a unique feature showing episodes of Christ's road to Calvary. The scenes show Jesus:

- ◆ condemned by Pilate
- ◆ going forth bearing His cross
- ◆ falling under the weight of the Cross and supported by Simon of Cyrene
- ◆ meeting with Mary, his mother and the women of Jerusalem
- ◆ stripped of his clothing
- ◆ nailed to the cross
- ◆ at the Crucifixion (above the door of the north porch).

It was part of the processional way instigated by Vicar Bennett, which led from the street below by St Aldhelm's Well, up the steps of the Via Crucis, through the North Porch into the church, out of the South Porch and up another flight of steps leading to the stone cross which Vicar Bennett brought to Frome from his previous parish of St Barnabus, Pimlico.

HISTORICAL CONNECTIONS

St Aldhelm

In the 7th century, Aldhelm, Abbott of Malmesbury, heard of ruthless bands of ruffians in the East & West Woodlands area of Selwood Forest and determined to civilise them. Resting on the banks of the River Frome whilst travelling between Sherborne and Malmesbury, he decided to build a mission station here as a means of converting the local inhabitants to Christianity and establishing law and order. Aldhelm was an influential man, being at the same time connected to royalty and having the common touch. Alfred the Great thought him the best poet in England at the time. St Aldhelm's mission station was the nucleus of the settlement that became Frome. Legend has it that he used to sit by a bridge playing his harp, and when he had a good gathering, he would stop playing and tell bible stories. A stained glass window at Chantry illustrates him thus.

Saxon period

Frome flourished in the later Saxon period. It was a royal manor, and so exempt from payment of Danegeld, and Saxon kings had a palace here. One of them, Edred (AD 946–955), died here, and his body was probably placed in the church before being taken to Winchester for burial.

Blessed Thomas Ken, Bishop of Bath & Wells 1684–1691

At a time when complacency was widespread throughout the Church of England, the country was more intent on enjoying the seven deadly sins than the seven virtues after the long Lent of the Commonwealth. Ken was renowned for the holiness and austerity of his life. He wrote manuals of prayers, and is best remembered today as a writer of hymns. He wrote the morning and evening hymns 'Awake my soul' and 'Glory to thee my God'. In 1679, whilst chaplain to Mary (later Mary II), married to William, Prince of Orange, he reprimanded William on his treatment of his wife. A couple of years later as chaplain to Charles II, he refused Nell Gwynn (Charles's mistress) lodging at his house in Winchester. In order that his mistress could have the house she desired, Charles appointed Ken Bishop of Bath & Wells in 1684. There Ken worked with the poor, regularly sharing his Sunday lunch with 12 poor men and women. When Charles II died, Ken swore allegiance to his successor James II. He wrote more manuals and set up charity schools, with Lord Weymouth, in all great towns of the diocese.

Extracts from the Archives

The changes of the Reformation were introduced in Frome with little fuss. But in 1634, the Archbishop of Canterbury visited Frome to check that all was well and that the altar was in the 'correct' position, ie against the east wall of the church - not in the middle. Apparently he was satisfied - he did not know that the communion table which had been standing in the centre of the church for many years was returned to its 'correct' position shortly before his visit, since the churchwardens had had prior notice of his coming.



Thomas Ken, Bishop of Bath and Wells, seated at table with poor of the city (from the stained glass by O'Connor in the Ken Chapel)

HISTORICAL CONNECTIONS (CONT'D)

Bishop Ken (cont'd)

The Monmouth Rebellion saw Wells taken by the rebels and, on their capture, great cruelty to them by Kirke and Judge Jefferies. Ken visited those in jail, protested at the cruelty and remonstrated with Judge Jefferies. He clashed again with Judge Jefferies in 1688 and was sent to the Tower for seditious libel (he had preached and petitioned against James II's 'Declaration of Indulgence'). When James II fled the country and William of Orange took over, Ken refused to swear an oath of allegiance to William – feeling that he could not break his existing oath to James II. He forfeited his see and lived the rest of his life at Longleat with Lord Weymouth. He is buried here at St John's – at the time, the nearest parish church in his old diocese of Bath & Wells.

Vicar Bennett, *member of the Oxford Movement who was Vicar of St John's from 1852 to 1886*

St John's owes much to Vicar W J E Bennett, Vicar of Frome-Selwood, who took on both the revival of the spiritual life of this parish and the major restoration and re-ordering of the building including the rebuilding the whole of the north aisle. In a letter to parishioners in 1877, he reported that the sum raised for the restoration amounted to £16439 17s 9³/₄d. This did not, he explained, include 'the ornamental work, the painted glass, the sculptures, the chapels, the Via Crucis and such-like works of restoration' all of which were the 'private thankofferings of loving hearts'.

He instituted a sung celebration of the Holy Communion on Sundays and Holy Days at an early hour. There was a daily celebration on week-days and also additional celebrations twice a week: one at 5.15 am for working people (who were afterwards given breakfast at the Vicarage), and one on Saturdays for children. Bennett started the first parish magazine, *The Old Church Porch*, in 1854 and soon after 1860 vestments and incense were introduced. St John's emerged from his 34 years' incumbency as 'one of the most renowned churches in England'. 'No iconoclast', it has been written, 'can undo the work which he has done. His voice will remain – in his work, in the church which he built (St Barnabas, Pimlico), in the church which he restored, in the faith which he revived and preached.' His grave is to be found outside the south wall of the chancel.

'A Mere Ruinous Heap ...'

St John's was described, shortly after Bennett's arrival in Frome in 1852 as 'a crumbling mass ready to fall down about our ears'.

'The churchyard was filled with nettles and rank-growing grass, mounds of graves piled up to such an extent as to be far above the base mouldings of the church, and the walls in consequence mouldering into rottenness.'

The tower was bulging out from its foundations, the spire inclined to one side, and inside the roof beams were in several places separate from the walls which were meant to support them.

The Chancel arch was separating from the tower, 'the north wall was bearing downhill and carrying the pillars of the aisle along with it'. These pillars, and indeed the whole arcade on the north side, were evidently overwhelmed with the weight of the huge gallery above them, whilst they were undermined by the numerous vaults in which the dead lay buried beneath.

'The pulpit was three-decker and fixed to a pillar on the south side of the nave, about midway between the chancel and the west door. The pews at the west end of the church faced the chancel, but those which were to the east of the reading desk turned their backs on the altar. The north gallery was groaning under the weight of the people in it - a favoured spot, because from here there could be obtained the best view of the preacher. The whole situation seemed to indicate not only the neglect of the church as a building but also a fundamental misconception of its teaching and tradition.'

Reminiscences from the Past ...

There have been many changes to St John's over the years.

The organ was originally at the back of the church before it was moved in to St John's chapel.

The font, once in the south-west corner of the church, was in disrepair in the early 19th century and another font was placed in the present Ken Chapel. That font was eventually given to Christ Church and the original font restored, and after a spell in the middle of the nave it was moved to its current position in St Nicholas Chapel in the 1860s.

Gas lighting came early to Frome - by 1831. The church also enjoyed gas lighting and the 1860s screen between the Lady Chapel and North Aisle is notable for being a gas light fitting. A close look reveals a valve on one of the uprights. Gas was fed along this to the golden lilies mounted above, and the top of the screen lit up.

Until the mid-20th century the church was still lit by gas-lamps, which were made of brass and stood in columns up the aisles. There were several of them on both sides of the nave, and, being five feet tall, they took an awful lot of cleaning.

Enter Reverend Cowley, priest of St John's from 1951 to 1966.

Suffice to say, he was not a lover of brass, and during his incumbency he managed, through much effort and paperwork, to strip the church not only of its gas lamps but also of several brass candlesticks. He also had the brass gate in the rood screen - and, indeed, the rood screen itself - in his sights, but that particular project eluded him. Nevertheless, he is remembered with much affection by members of the brass cleaning team.

NAVE

West End statues (from North):

- ◆ *St Alban*: First martyr of England (died 304), a Roman soldier who sheltered a Christian priest at a time of persecution of Christians. He converted to Christianity and was ordered to be put to death when he refused to worship Roman gods.
- ◆ *St Aldhelm*: (c639-25 May 709), founder of St John's c680, Abbot of Malmesbury Abbey, Bishop of Sherborne, poet and literature scholar.
- ◆ *St Andrew*: Patron Saint of Bath & Wells. The first disciple and first apostle.
- ◆ *St George*: Patron Saint of England. Thought to be a Roman soldier who protested against Rome's persecution of Christians and was imprisoned and tortured, but stayed true to his faith. Beheaded at Lydda in Palestine.

Rood screen

Designed by the Kempe company, it was erected in 1892, with the cross and figures by Holzmeister Zwink of Oberammergau and the screen by Norman & Burt of Burgess Hill, Sussex.

The wall painting above the rood screen of the Lamb in Glory (hidden by the cross) 'Worthy is the lamb that was slain to receive power' is thought to be an image from Revelation, familiar from the hymn 'Holy, Holy, Holy' and shows the saints 'casting down their golden crowns around the glassy sea'.

Parvise Room

The room contains the records of the church and parishes together with much of the history of Frome dating back centuries.

The word Parvise comes from the Latin word for Paradise and is the room that the church relics were kept in before the Reformation, and hence often a room for keeping church records. It is usually above the porch and was also often used as a Priest's room for itinerant clergy.

Pulpit The Eight Preachers:

- ◆ *Noah*, the preacher of righteousness
- ◆ *Moses*, the preacher of the Law (the horns are a result of mistranslation)
- ◆ *Elijah*, the preacher of repentance
- ◆ *St John the Baptist*, who preached the coming of Jesus
- ◆ *St Peter*, preacher to the Jews
- ◆ *St Paul*, preacher to the Gentiles
- ◆ *St Chrysostom*, 'The Golden Mouth', a Bishop of the Greek Church
- ◆ *St Ambrose*, a Bishop of the Latin Church, intrepid defender of the Faith.

Extracts from the archives

By the 17th century attempts were being made to maintain the fabric of the church. A series of items in the accounts books for 1612 referred to the re-pointing of the steeple and re-gilding of the weathercock.

This turned out to be more expensive than anticipated, as the man doing the pointing evidently had a fall. The churchwardens had to pay 3d 'for aquae vilae when the pointer took his hurte', 21s 6d for lodging him and his own expenses 'from the time of his hurte, until he was carried away' and 10s to have him transported by carrier to Salisbury, besides the 20s for the work he actually did.

They also had to pay 2s for the woman who watched with the pointer and, for some inexplicable reason, 1s 6d to 'the man which came with the pointer's mother-in-law.'

In 1742, it was again necessary to carry out repairs to the spire, which had become very dilapidated.

Workmen left a tub containing stones and mortar suspended from the steeple when they finished work for the day. One Sunday during Evensong, some boys threw stones at this tub, with the result that it fell through a skylight and landed on the sounding board of the pulpit just as the preacher was about to begin his sermon. The congregation assumed from the noise that the steeple was falling down and took to their heels in panic.

One of them found the boys responsible and gave them such a lecture that one ran away to sea and did not return for seven years.

KEMPE STAINED GLASS WINDOWS

Starting west end north side and going around the nave windows to west end south side, the windows tell the story of St John the Baptist from Angel Gabriel appearing to his aged parents through to his death.

North Aisle (*starting at the West end*)

1. An angel tells Zechariah that his wife will, after all, have a child, in spite of her age. 'Fear not, Zechariah, for your prayer is heard.'
2. The visit of Elizabeth to Mary. 'Blessed art thou among women.'
3. Zechariah obeys God's command to name the child John. 'His name is John. He shall be called John.'
4. 'The word was made flesh.'

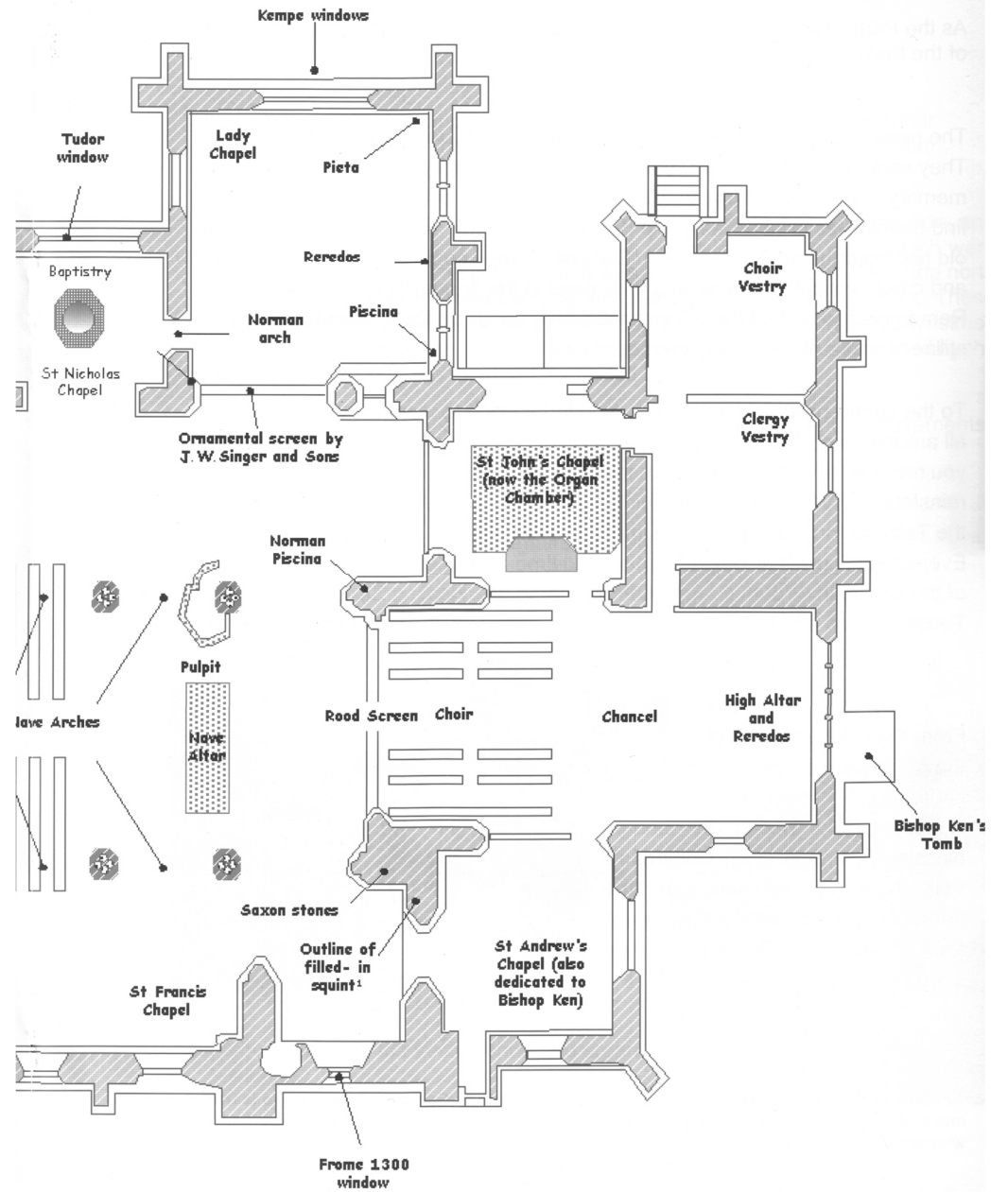
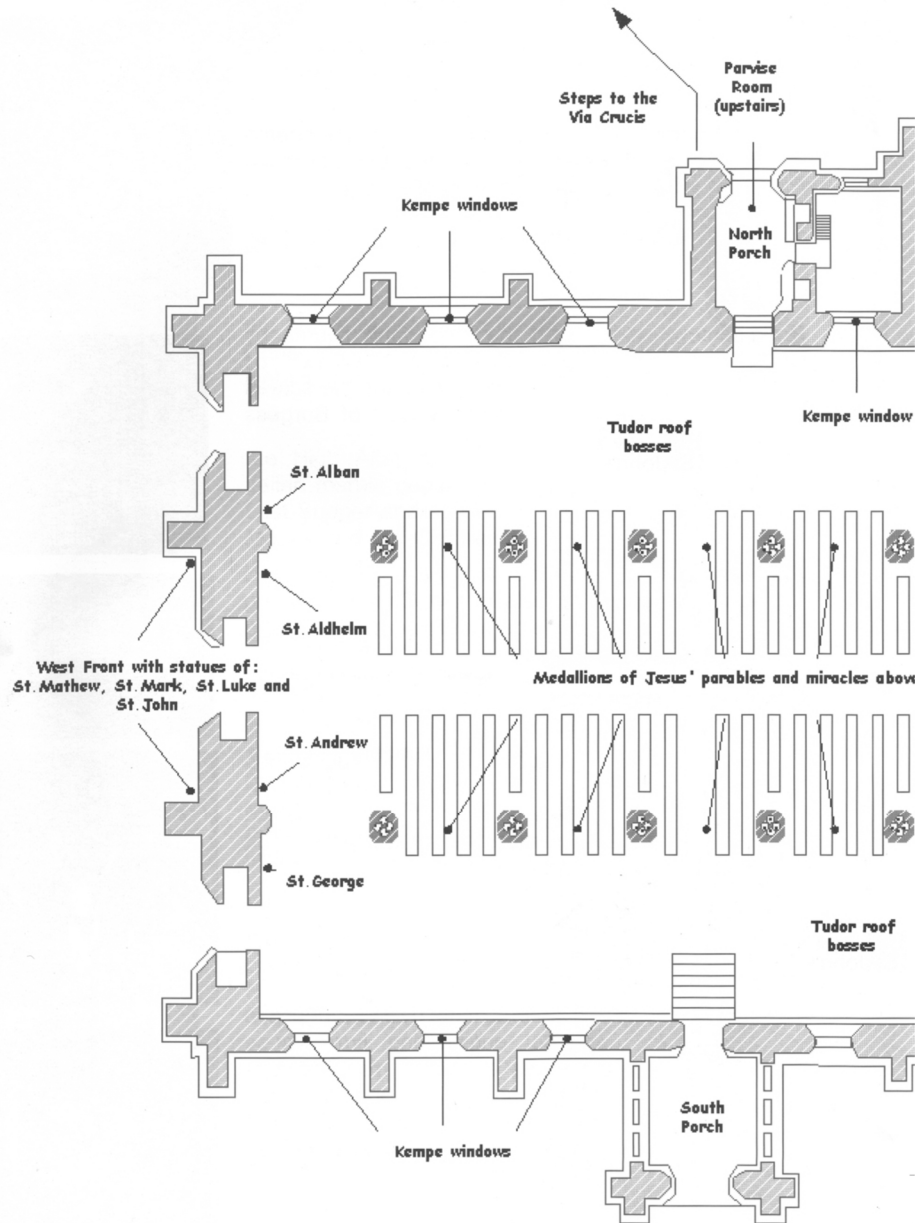
South Aisle (*starting from the East*)

5. John preaching in the wilderness.
6. John baptises Jesus.
7. John is thrown into prison. 'John said unto Herod. It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife. And he laid hold upon John and bound him in prison.'
8. John speaks to Jesus's disciples while in prison.
9. John is beheaded. One servant brings in a plate of fruit while another brings in the head of John.
10. John's body is taken away for burial.

Whilst the Kempe windows in the nave are faithful to the design of earlier Hardman design windows there, the three Kempe windows in the Lady Chapel replacing earlier windows by O'Connor were fresh designs.

Note the wheat sheaves in the windows, sometimes with the outline of a tower. On Charles Kempe's death in 1907 the firm became Kempe & Co Ltd under the managing director Walter Ernest Tower and John William Lisle, designer and chief draughtsman who originally joined the firm in 1886. The original logo, often reproduced in the stained glass windows as a signature, is described as 'a trio of golden wheat sheaves on a red background with a wavy gold border', but was eventually replaced by a single wheat sheaf usually in the bottom left-hand corner of a stained glass window. In 1907 this was replaced with the single golden wheat sheaf with a black tower superimposed on the head. The last one of the firm's production had the tower laid on its side to denote the last of its line.

The Parish Church of St John the Baptist, Frome



A SELECTION OF THE MEDALLIONS



THE MEDALLIONS

Seventeen of the stone medallions in the nave were given to the church at the time of Vicar Bennett's restorations. They show the Miracles and Parables and were intended to work as teaching aids. The eighteenth medallion was given in memory of George Ashby – sacristan in 1903.

The Miracles

North Wall (from the west end)

1. The raising of Jairus's daughter (Matthew 9 v18-26)
2. The first miraculous draught of fishes (Luke 5 v4-7)
3. The raising of the son of the widow of Nain (Luke 7 v11-15)
4. The healing of the epileptic boy (Mark 9 v14-29)
5. The impotent man at the pool of Bethesda (John 5 v2-9)
6. The feeding of the five thousand (John 6 v1-14)
7. The walking on the sea and the failing of St Peter (Matthew 14 v22-33)
8. The opening of the eyes of the one born blind (John 9 v1-12)

West Wall (north side)

9. The raising of Lazarus (John 11 v1-17)

The Parables

South Wall (from west end)

1. The sower and the seed (Mark 4 v1-20)
2. The unmerciful servant (Matthew 18 v23-35)
3. The Pharisee and the publican (Luke 18v9-14)
4. The good Samaritan (Luke 10 v25-37)
5. The prodigal son (Luke 15 v11-32)
6. The wise and foolish virgins (Matthew 25 v1-13)
7. The lost sheep (Luke 15 v1-7)
8. Dives and Lazarus (Luke 16 v19-31)

West Wall (south side)

9. The parable of the talents (Matthew 25 v14-30)

THE TUDOR WINDOW

Cabell/Leversedge family

Cabell – Horse salient (upright)
Leversedge – on right (see bottom left of shield)

Braunche family – Lords of the Manor 1239-1350

Silver horse on left
Golden candlestick on right
Branch (pun on the family name)



Leversedge family

Lords of the Manor for 200 years beginning in the 16th century
Leopard's head with fleur de lys over a chevron with three dolphins

Cabell family

Silver horse on left
Rebus on Cabell name on right – K and a bell enclosed by a rope or cable

ST NICHOLAS CHAPEL (THE BAPTISTRY)

St Nicholas Chapel was built and established as a Chantry Chapel (now the Baptistry) in 1408. It was founded on the initiative of a number of wealthy men. A petition of 1402 states: *'Within the parish, which is very wide, there are many merchants who often, for their business transfer themselves to other parts, and are thereby often hindered from hearing Mass according to their wish, in the parish church. They desire to have Mass celebrated daily whenever opportune or expedient at the Altar of St Nicholas in the said church ... and for one of the greater bells to be sounded to convoke the people thereto ...'*

Six years later, by which time the 'many merchants' seem to have reduced to just two men, Henry IV granted licence *'for John Cabbe or Cable of Frome Braunche* and John de Frome to found a chantry of one chaplain to celebrate divine service daily at the altar of St Nicholas in the parish church of Frome Braunche* in honour of St Mary and St Nicholas the Bishop for the good estate of the king and the said John and John and for their souls after death and the souls of the parents and friends of the said John and John'*.

* Frome Braunche – the Braunche family held the Frome Vallis manor before the Leversedge family, hence the reference in the place name at the time.

Features

- ◆ 13th century font and tall wooden cover (1884)
- ◆ nets and fish in plasterwork around walls (symbolising fishers of men)
- ◆ Tudor window – which retains its original stonework. The four shields in the window are the oldest glass in the church (probably 1520) and illustrate the manorial history of Frome (see facing page). There is a brass memorial on the opposite wall erected by the American Cabells.
- ◆ The Seven Virtues & The Seven Deadly Sins – in marble images on floor (more details of these on the next page).

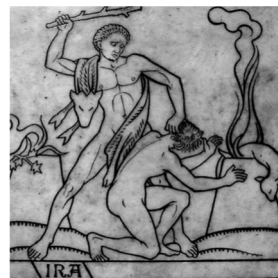
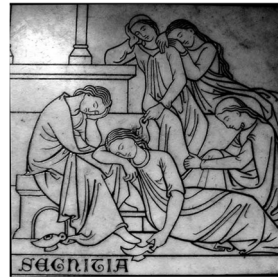


Trinity of fishes from the plasterwork of the Baptistry

VIRTUES



DEADLY SINS



THE BAPTISTRY FLOOR

The Seven Virtues (inner ring of marble images]

Diligentia	Zeal	The Wise Virgins	(Matthew 25:1-13)
Temperantia	Temperance	St John the Baptist	(Matthew 3 : 4)
Placabilitas	Meekness	St Stephen	(Acts 7 : 54-56)
Castitas	Chastity	The Annunciation	(Luke 1: 26-38)
Charitas	Love	Jonathan and David	(1 Samuel :18 1-4)
Humilitas	Humility	The Publican	(Luke 18 : 13- 14)
Continentia	Contentment	Barzillai & David	(2 Samuel 17: 27-29)

The Seven Deadly Sins (outer ring of marble images)

Segnitia	Sloth	The Foolish Virgins	(Matthew 25:1-13)
Voracitas	Greed	The Rich Man	(Luke 16: 19- 31)
Ira	Anger	Cain	(Genesis 4: 5-8)
Luxuria	Lust	Potiphar's wife	(Genesis 39:6-7)
Invidia	Envy	Saul and David	(1Samuel 18: 10-11)
Superbia	Pride	Haman and Mordecai	(Esther 3:1-6)
Avaritia	Covetousness	Judas with the bag of silver	(Mark 26: 14-16)

ST JOHN'S CHAPEL (now housing the organ)

The Chantry Chapel of St John was built 1377–78 – endowed by gifts of land from four local landowners – John de la Mare, Walter Bychwode, John Whitcomb and Argentine Horseleghe (the last of whom gave 14 acres). The window retains its original stonework.

This chapel was held with the Lady Chapel by the Vallis manor until the 19th century when after much correspondence they were handed to the care of the parish.

The chapel now houses the organ, which has three manuals and 32 speaking stops.

Leversedge Legend

The legend tells of Edmund Leversedge of the Manor House at Vallis, Frome. Edmund had led a wild and dissolute life and dabbled in the black arts. One day he fell into a coma, his tongue turned black and his eyes stood out like organ stops. He remained in that state for three days during which time he visited both heaven and hell. He met God who reprimanded him for the life he had been living. Edmund begged to be given another chance and stated that if this were to be granted, he would go to his parish priest to receive instruction. God told Leversedge that the parish priest was no better than he was. The wretched man, seeing his chance for redemption slipping away, thought desperately and said he would present himself to the Lord Bishop for instruction. He was told that the Lord Bishop was worse than either the parish priest or Leversedge himself. Fearing that he was on a certain course to hell, Leversedge finally agreed to accept instruction from the priest at Westbury. On his return to consciousness, Edmund Leversedge presented himself to the priest at Westbury and received instruction. He turned over a completely new leaf and when eventually he died, he was buried at Westbury.

The table tomb in the Lady Chapel at Frome St John's is that of the Leversedge family, one of the great families of Frome, and is a reminder of the judgement to come.



**Madonna and Child,
and Pieta, from the
Lady Chapel**



LADY CHAPEL

The Lady Chapel is, at least in part, one of the earliest parts of the church. It certainly formed part of the Norman church. The Norman arched door from the Baptistry to the chapel is one of the remaining features.

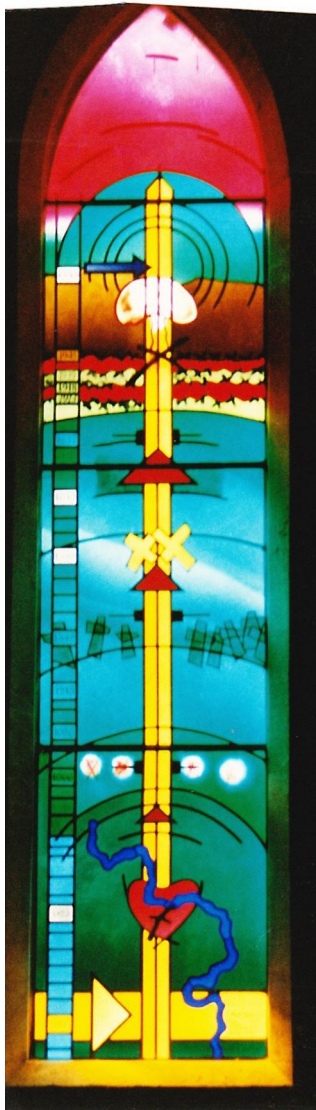
Features include:

- ◆ **Reredos**, which dates from 1924 and was given by Miss Mary Baily, a generous benefactor of Frome. It has carvings of Elizabeth (mother of St John the Baptist), St Catherine (with broken wheel), Angel & Blessed Virgin Mary, St John the Baptist (with lamb), and Anna the mother of Mary. The gift of the reredos necessitated the re-positioning of the carving of:
 - ◆ **Statue of Madonna and Child** (awaiting re-siting on a plinth by the screen), and
 - ◆ **Pieta** – a representation of the Virgin Mary with the dead Christ across her knees after his descent from the Cross
 - ◆ **Norman relics:**
 - * doorway
 - * window (now with memorial tablet)
 - * piscina (there are two more in the church).
 - ◆ **Saxon window**
 - ◆ **Kempe windows** – central theme of Blessed Virgin Mary and the nativity
 - ◆ **West wall window** – last remaining window by O'Connor jnr, part of the 1860s set he made for the Lady Chapel
 - ◆ **14th century table tomb** of the Leversedge family – with the emaciated body of a man lying in a shroud (*see facing page*).
 - ◆ **Lady Chapel Screen**, complete with gas lamp feature, made by John Webb Singer – a local engineering firm whose works embellish many famous buildings. A set of early 17th century tomb railings from a Leversedge family tomb was for some time misidentified as a former screen to the chapel. They are now in the V & A Museum in London.
 - ◆ **Roof bosses** with images of the passion (nails, hammer, ladder, crown of thorns)

The piscina in the corner of the north aisle is also Norman. It is not in its original position and may well have been in the Norman extension to the Lady Chapel.

FROME 1300 WINDOW

Designed by Mark Angus



- 1985 After 1300 years the light of the Gospel from St Aldhelm's Church continues to shine
- 1945) The Atom Bomb
- 1939) The two World Wars
- 1918)
- 1914)
- 1536 Dissolution of the monasteries
- 1349 The Black Death
- 1066 Norman invasion
- 685 St Aldhelm establishes first church in Frome (red heart of the town; blue river Frome; cross marks the church)
- 597 St Augustine lands in Kent

CHANCEL AND SANCTUARY

The brass gates leading into the Chancel were made by Singers of Frome. The choir stalls and oak screens were introduced in 1856. The roof was restored in 1846. The bosses of the hammerbeam roof are decorated with golden-haired angels carrying shields bearing emblems of the passion. *(Note: Wall paintings still lie beneath the white paint. A renovated section in the roof shows the original finish.)*

The pavement before the High Altar is inlaid marble, granite and alabaster. The High Altar is of carved oak topped by a stone slab. The reredos is made of Italian Carrara marble and shows: North – The striking of the rock by Moses to bring forth water for the Children of Israel; Centre – The Last Supper; South – The Children of Israel gathering Manna in the wilderness.

ST ANDREW'S CHAPEL (KEN CHAPEL)

St Andrew's Chapel was built and established as a Chantry Chapel in 1412 (now dedicated to Bishop Ken). It was also endowed with gifts of land that were granted to the Thynne family in 1548 when chantries were suppressed. The Ken window shows the central images of The Good Shepherd and of Bishop Ken at prayer. The lights on either side show Bishop Ken's seal (bottom left), the Arms of the See of Bath & Wells and also of Bishop Ken (bottom right), and Bishop Ken feeding the poor (middle left). The remaining images are of Jesus's ministry to the sick and poor. The tiles around the altar show Bishop Ken's monogram.

The chapel was used in the late 18th century and early 19th century to house the town's fire engine. Around 1828 a bishop complained, and the town had to build a new fire station in Christchurch Street West.

SQUINT, INCLUDING SAXON STONES

These stones do not seem to have any special associations with the church or with each other. The upper stone is part of a vertical shaft of a cross, now lying on its side. The lower carving is of an animal in a different style of carving and of a different rock. They probably date from the 8th and 9th centuries respectively. *(Note the original marks in the floor from bell-ringing.)*

ST FRANCIS CHAPEL

This chapel with the Madonna and child triptych commemorates the golden jubilee as priest of the Revd W F H Randolph (Vicar 1899–1938). The chapel is now used for private prayer.

BELL TOWER

The present ring of eight bells are by no means the originals yet they are of some antiquity. There were bells by the early 15th century as they are mentioned in the petition for founding of the St Nicholas Chapel. By the late 16th century there were five bells and a chiming clock according to the churchwardens' account books. The present eight bells (in the key of C# major) are:

Treble	6.5cwt	Wm Cockey Bell Founder	1724
2	7 cwt	Wm Cockey Bell Founder	1724
3	10cwt	Wm Bilbie of Chewstoke	1788
4	12cwt	John Lott	1624
5	14cwt	I L [John Lott]	1624
6	17cwt	Wm Cockey Bell Founder	1746
7	22cwt	Robt Wells of Aldbourne	1792
Tenor	31cwt	I L [John Lott]	1662

The survival of Nos 4 and 5 through the English Civil War is of note as they bear the badge and motto of Charles, Prince of Wales.



FROME ST JOHN THE BAPTIST HISTORY (CONT'D)

- 1408 St Nicholas's Chapel is built and established as a Chantry Chapel (now the Baptistry). Bells were in use by this time as a Petition of 1402 shows
- 1412 St Andrew's Chapel is built and established as a Chantry Chapel (now the Bishop Ken Chapel).
- 1420 The nave is extended westward and the Chancel extended eastward. The roof of the nave is raised and the clerestory added. About this time also, the tower is heightened and a spire added to it. The rood loft is also introduced.
- 1445 An event occurs which involves the violent shedding of blood in the church or churchyard, as a result of which the building has to be 'reconciled'. This means that for a time all services cease – no marriages, burials or baptisms – all ministrations of the church are stopped to teach the people a lesson, until the office of 'reconciliation' is carried out.
- 1634 The changes of the Reformation are introduced in Frome with little fuss, and when Charles I wants to reverse some of the changes, the Archbishop of Canterbury pays a surprise visit and is satisfied with what he sees, not knowing that the Churchwardens have been given prior notice of the visit and have hastily moved the altar back to the east end where it had been before the Reformation. A few years later, in 1643, Puritans take more extreme measures in the other direction and remove all the stained glass from the church.
- 1707 Galleries are built in the north and south aisles (removed in -77 1856).
- 1814 Old buildings in front of the West Door are removed, making the forecourt. The Wyattville Screen is erected.
- 1852 Vicar Bennett virtually re-builds St John's as a Victorian Anglo- -56 Catholic Church.
- 1866 The Via Crucis is erected.

We hope that you have enjoyed your visit to our church and that this guide book has helped you to get the most out of it.

Do also look at our website: www.stjohnsfrome.com

Back cover photograph: Via Crucis by Gerry Russell

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