

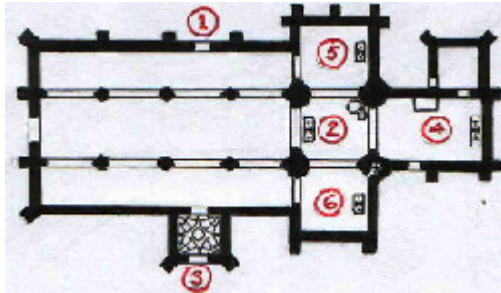


FSCC CHURCH CARD No 23

NORTH CURRY

Church of St Peter and St Paul

North Curry is one of the string of villages which lie on the ridge of firm ground between the levels of Curry Moor and the River Tone to the north and the West Sedge Moor to the south.



We do not know when the earliest church was built on the site, but the north door remains of the Norman church which preceded the present building. North Curry was a royal manor, but in 1189 Richard I passed it to the dean and chapter of Wells, part of the endowment of the new cathedral being built by Bishop Reginald FitzJocelin. The dean and chapter of Wells are still the patrons of the living.

The church is centred round the octagonal central tower. It has an aisled nave, transepts, and a simple unaisled chancel. Large and impressive, it gives the appearance of having been planned as a whole. Its present appearance, is, though, the result not of one concentrated campaign of building, but rather of amendments, alterations and improvements throughout the Middle Ages, and of care and restoration over the last two hundred years. Of these last the main Victorian restoration was carried out in 1881 by J Oldrid Scott, while more recently major repairs were carried out to the tower and parapets in 1998 with further major work planned for 2004



The door in the north aisle (1), with a segmental arch decorated with zigzag moulding, dates from about 1180, and is all that remains of the Norman church. The nave, south porch and chancel are capped with parapets pierced in quatrefoil patterns. The transepts have parapets with blind panelling, while the nave aisles are simply battlemented. The octagonal tower (2) was built about 1300. It has one tier of windows, with cusped Y tracery in them. Each corner has a pilaster buttress with a small hood below the upper string course, and a parapet pierced with three diamonds on each face caps the whole. On the east, north and south faces the old roof-lines of transepts and chancel can be seen. The south porch (3) has three niches on its front, now filled with statues of Our Lady, St Peter and St Paul, all placed there in the 1881 restoration. Inside, it has a lovely fan vault.





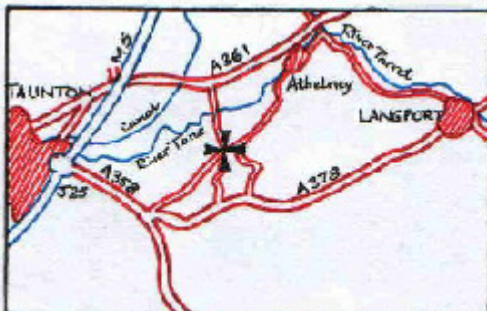
The first impression of the interior is of a typical Perpendicular "hall of light" with a large clearstory of big windows glazed with plain glass. A second look reveals that nothing is simple. The piers of the arcades run up into the mouldings of the arches without intervening capitals. Above them the clearstory windows do not correspond with the arcades. Also in the clearstory wall can be seen where some of the windows of an earlier clearstory, blocked when the later windows were inserted, have been uncovered. It would appear that after the tower was built, aisles and a clearstory were added in the second quarter of the fourteenth century. Some time later this decorated clearstory was heightened, and the larger windows inserted. No records survive to help us to date any of these changes. The panelled roof of the north aisle is mediaeval, the roofs of the nave and south aisle date from the 1881 restoration.

The crossing shows a similar piecemeal approach to its construction. The western pair of piers are plain masses of stone chamfered diagonally, while the eastern pair have an undulating contour, with capitals of a decidedly Perpendicular nature. The opening is closed by a wooden vault. There are stone seats round the bases of these piers, survivals from the days before pews.

By the beginning of the sixteenth century the chancel (4) was in a ruinous condition. The Dean and Chapter of Wells had it rebuilt in 1502 by Master Thomas Harries, Treasurer of the chapter, at a cost of £52 13s 8d. The chancel now contains much fine woodwork, including panelling mostly done in the parish in the 1930s. The reredos behind the High Altar is by Bligh Bond. The organ case was designed by J Oldred Scott, and contains fragments of the mediaeval rood screen.



The transept chapels have been restored to use in recent times. In the north, the Lady Chapel (5) there is a piscina with traces of colouring. The south, the Chapel of St Michael and the Holy Souls (6), contains a fine modern statue of St Michael, Guide of Departing Souls, by Francis Stephens.



How to get there : From Taunton and the M5 take the A358 Ilminster road. Turn left onto the A378 Langport road, and shortly after the turn take the left fork signed to North Curry and Stoke St Gregory. Alternatively, take any of the well-signed small roads from either the A378 or A361. there is limited parking along the south side of the churchyard.

One of a series of Church Cards produced by the Friends of Somerset Churches and Chapels.

For more details contact FSCC at 12 Quantock View, Bishops Lydeard, TA4 3AW

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