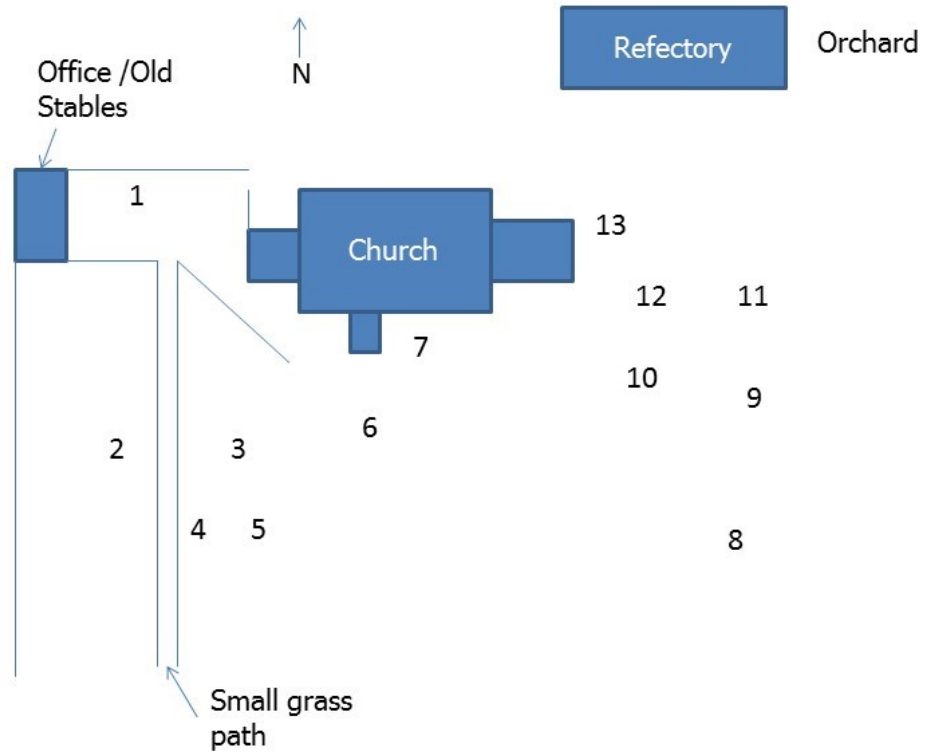


Part 3. The Churchyard

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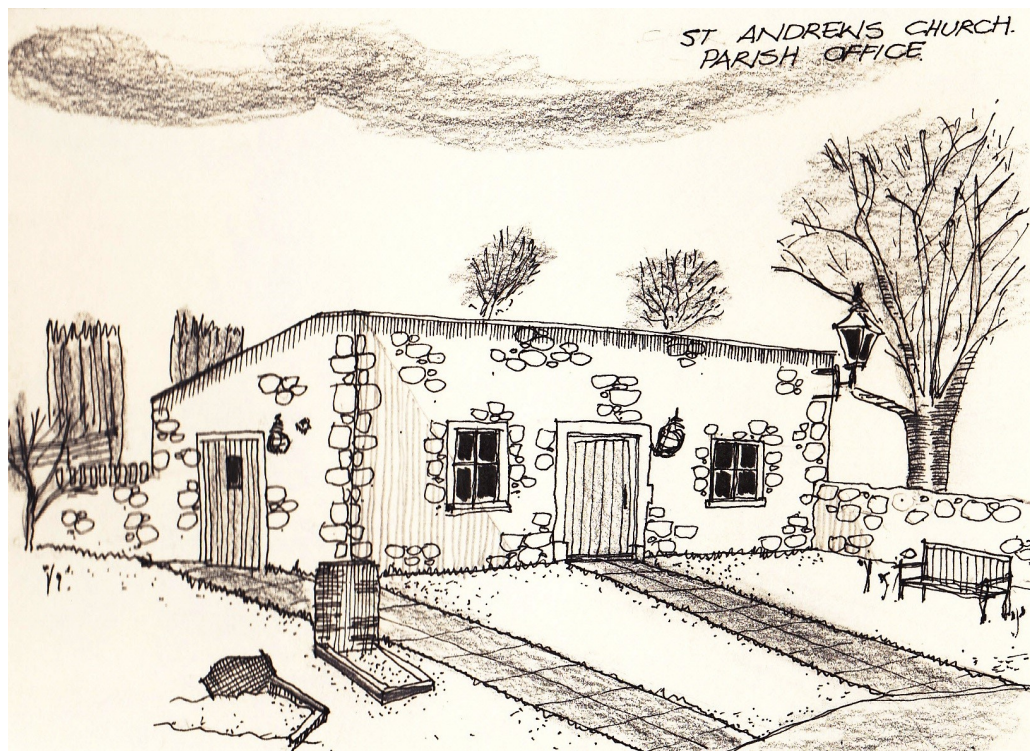
1. Swiss air disaster memorial seats.
2. Grave of V. Crook.
3. Grave of H. F. Wear.
4. Grave of G Bridges
5. Millennium yew
6. Burrow monument
7. Seymon Knight tomb
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9. Cross
10. John Wall railed tomb
11. Highwayman memorial
12. St Congar's walking stick
13. Watts & Inman tombs



*Above: Plan of the churchyard (not to scale).
Right: The small grass path looking south.*



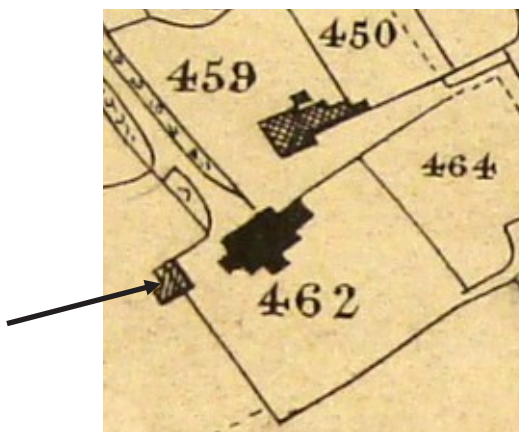
The Stables



The stables. Sketch by Michael Greaves.

The vestry minute book for the 4th April 1825 records:

"It is also agreed that a Stable be erected at North West corner of the Churchyard and expenses attending the Building the said Stable to be paid out of the poors rate. Joseph Haythorne and 10 others."



The 1839 Tithe map. Courtesy of Congresbury History Group. The stables are first shown on this map as indicated by the arrow.

It is said that the stables were required for the horses of parishioners living in distant parts. After 1865, when the ecclesiastical district of St Anne at Hewish was formed out of Congresbury, Wick St. Lawrence, Yatton, Kewstoke, Puxton and Banwell, the stables were rarely used for their original purpose.

The building, with its attractive doorway (obviously taken from somewhere else), was converted into a church office and officially opened by the Archdeacon on 7th June 2006.

1. Swiss Air Disaster

On the 10th April 1973 twenty villagers set off from Bristol's Lulsgate airport on an exciting trip to Basle in Switzerland. In heavy snow the Vickers Vanguard aircraft, operated by Invicta International Airlines, hit the hillside 300 metres south of the Herrenmatt hamlet, Hochwald, Switzerland. Of the 145 people on board only 37 survived.
All 20 passengers from Congresbury lost their lives.
They are listed below.

**Mrs Aileen Gill
Hazel Gill**

**Mr Ivor Gill
Mrs Maija (Marie) Gill
John Gill**

**Mr Raymond (Ray) Batt
Mrs Beryl Batt**

Mrs Irene Weaver

Mrs Agnes (Ellen) Rawlings

**Mr William (Bill) Price
Mrs Dorothy (Dot) Price**

Mrs Myrtle Reakes

**Mrs Jean Roynon
Mrs Linda Davis
Ellen Roynon
Mrs Evelyn Davis**

Mrs Grace Searle

Mrs Rose E Clark

Mrs Florence Durman

**Miss Kathleen (May)
Atwell**

These victims are buried in the ancient churchyard and in the Parish Council Burial Ground to the west.

A memorial to the victims in the form of three attractive wooden seats is in front of the current office block (west of the church).



Above –The memorial seats and plaque.

2. Grave of Private V. J. Crook



Location:

From the start of the small footpath go south towards the wall and the grave is about half way down on the right. Behind it is a large angel statue.

5675198 Private Victor Crook was buried with military honours.

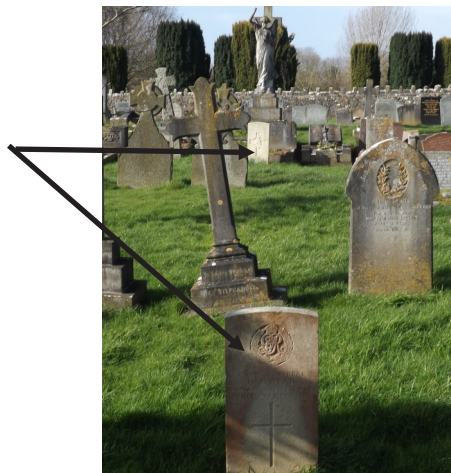
He was only 21 when he was killed in 1940 and the first from the village to be killed in World War 2. Victor was hit by a long range shell when on sentry duty at Dover Marine Station.

3. Grave of Corporal H. F. Wear

Location:

From V. J. Crook's grave it is directly east across the grass path as indicated by the arrows in the lower photograph.

P/6688 Corporal H. F. Wear of the Military Police Corps died on the 29th November 1918.



4. Crimean War Veteran

Location: From the bottom of the small footpath facing the church, go six graves up on the right and then one across.

Not far from V.J. Cook's grave is the grave of Private George Bridges of the 55th & 68th Regiment who lived in Paul's Causeway and died on the 13th February 1908 at the age of 75.

He was a Crimean veteran and had medals and bars for Alma, Sebastapol and Inkerman, and the Turkish and New Zealand medals. A contemporary newspaper account of his death gives the information that he was crippled for the last 22 years of his life, as a result of a chill caught in the trenches during the Crimean War. Lord Roberts, on hearing of his serious illness, said:

"I am sure he has done his duty to his country, and that it is only fitting that he should receive a soldier's honour at the end of his life."

He was subsequently buried with military honours and a newspaper account of the event records:

"Despite unpropitious weather, a large number of persons assembled to witness the imposing ceremony. The service was conducted by the Rev R. H. Maunsell-Eyre, vicar. The cortege left deceased's late residence at three pm, the coffin, which was covered with the Union Jack, being borne by 12 men of G Company Devon and Somerset Royal Engineer Volunteers, under Co. Sergt-Major Bartlett. In advance there was a firing party from No 9 Company 1st Glo'ster Royal Garrison Artillery Volunteers, under Sergt-Major Hobbs. R.G.A. At the graveside the firing party fired three volleys, which were followed by the sounding of the "Last Post." There were many beautiful floral tributes. During the afternoon and evening muffled peals were rung on the bells of St Andrew's church."



George Bridges' grave.

5. Millennium Yew Tree

Location.: A little way east of George Bridges' grave.



The Millennium Tree 2013.

In 2000 a yew tree was planted in the southern section of the closed churchyard. The yew is commonly found in churchyards, one suggested reason being that because of their extreme age yews were associated with ancestral burial grounds. They can live for several thousand years – the yew at Llangernyw in Clwyd, north Wales is said to be 4000 years old.

Spanish or Italian yew was preferred for making bows, in medieval times, so it's likely that only in an emergency would weapons be made from churchyard yews which are English. Males from 7 years old were expected to learn the crossbow and practise for the defence of the country. Archery butts existed close to the site of Court House.



Court House 2004.

6. Burrow Monument

Location: 6m south of the porch.



This sandstone chest tomb is dated 1770 and has two inscription panels either side with Rococo swirls to their borders and incised lettering in florid script to Edward Burrow. Edward died on the 13th May 1770 aged 37 and his inscription reads:
"of Wrington Steward to the Hon Earl of Bath who did discharge his duties with diligence and fidelity."

Earliest Tombstones

*Beneath those rugged elms, that yew-tree's shade,
Where heaves the turf in many a mouldering heap,
Each in his narrow cell for ever laid,
The rude forefathers of the hamlet sleep.
Thomas Gray 1716-77.*

Tombstones dating before 1600 are rare. It seems that gradually the inside of churches filled up with burials and it became impossible to inter local people of high status so they were buried outside, near to the church wall. Congresbury is fortunate in having an early example.

7. Seymon Knight Tomb.

Location: East of the south porch.

The earliest inscription in the churchyard is that of Seymon Knight.



The inscription reads, "Here lieth the body of Seymon Knight who died the 28 Jan ano do 1615."



8. Dawn Redwood

Location: South east corner of the closed churchyard.

This type of tree was thought to have been extinct for millions of years. The tree is a Dawn Redwood, which, until 1941, when it was discovered in China, was only known from Cretaceous fossils. It is unchanged and identical to fossil remains.

The tree was planted in the 1970s, by the Rev John Simmonds and his wife, to mark their 25th wedding anniversary.

The Dawn Redwood in 2013.

9. The Cross

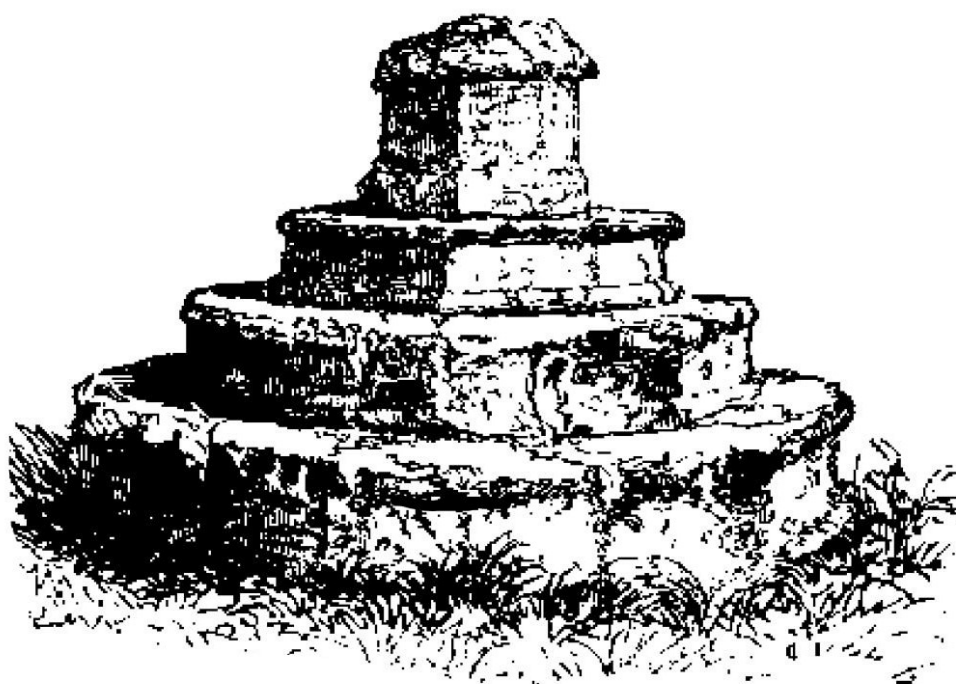
Location: South east in the closed churchyard beside the footpath .



This 13th or 14th century churchyard cross was intended to both sanctify the churchyard and commemorate the dead. Gravestones only became fashionable in the late 17th century.

It was probably a processional Station of the Cross on Palm Sunday when it would have been wreathed in "palms" usually the branches from a yew tree.

When Dr C. Pooley examined the cross in the 1870s, he described it as follows:
"The churchyard cross is a fine specimen of fourteenth century work. Two stages of it only are preserved - the steps, which are three in number, octagonal, and with sunk facings and weather-drip mouldings and splays; and the socket, which is an equal-sided octagon, with deep drip and a set-off at base. It stands east of the south porch of the church."



Congresbury churchyard cross (from Pooley 1877).

North Somerset County Archaeologist, Vince Russett, considers that the hollow top to the socket (see the photo below) appears to be unique as other sockets have either a shaft, the remains of one, or a deep mortise for a shaft (either round or square section). Perhaps the socket has been hollowed out for some purpose after the shaft was demolished.



Hollow top to socket of cross. March 2014.

10. John Wall Railed Tomb

Location: Ten metres east of the chancel.



The railed tomb enclosure bears an inscription "*Burial Ground of John Wall Brinsea.*" The tombstone up against the west of the railings is inscribed TW 1789 and relates to Thomas W Wall who died 18th July 1789 and is described as of Puxton. It has the inscription:
"From stately Palaces we must remove, The gloomy Mansions of the Grave to prove, But those who doth in Jesus Christ believe, The Grave cannot confine nor Hell receive, Wise then's the Man, who labours to secure, His passage safe and his reception sure."

There are several plaques in church to the Wall family, for example:
"William Wall died 1861 son of John Wall of Brinsea of Grosvenor Lodge, Highgate, buried at Highgate cemetery."

11. Hardwick Memorial

Location: East of the church beside a grass bank.



The granite cross. January 2013.

In the churchyard is a 3-metre high granite cross, which is a memorial to a brave farmer who fought off an attack by a highwayman in October 1830.

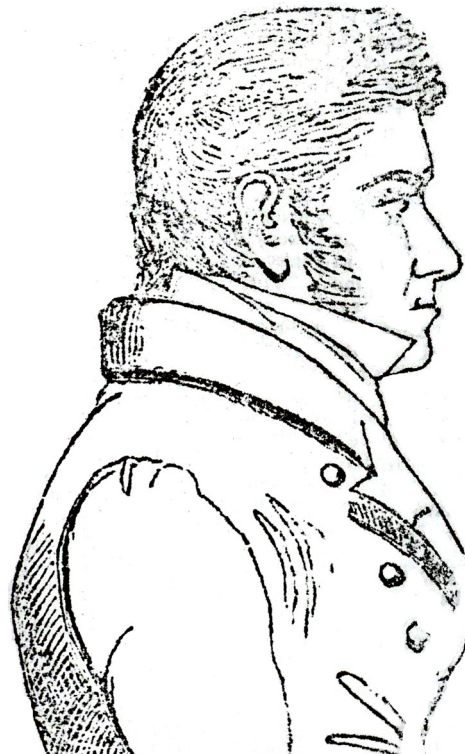
The Morning Chronicle of October 27th 1830 reported the event as follows:

"We have just ascertained the following particulars of a most diabolical attempt to commit murder, and in that we fear it must terminate.

Mr Charles Capell Hardwick, a highly respected farmer and grazier, of Huish, in the parish of Congresbury, Somersetshire, in returning from Bristol market on Thursday night, overtook a person on horseback, about the five-mile stone at Ashton; they rode and conversed together until they came to the Heath, about a mile and a half below Congresbury Inn; being then close together, Mr Hardwick was alarmed by the flash and report of a pistol near him, and at the same time felt as if he had been struck on the shoulder. His horse started; but Mr Hardwick having recovered himself, he turned round and observed the person he rode with had also turned, and was galloping away as fast as possible. Mr Hardwick followed him at full speed and overtook him at the bridge leading into Congresbury Moor, about half a mile from where he was shot, when the person struck him several times across the head with a large bludgeon, which nearly stunned him, and again galloped forward. Mr Hardwick, however, still continued the pursuit, calling to persons on the road to stop the villain. About 150 yards from Congresbury Inn, towards Bristol, in order to avoid a cart, the man attempted to cross the road, when his horse fell, and Mr Hardwick being close upon him, his own horse also fell over. They both struggled a short time upon the road, when Mr Hardwick felt a sharp instrument penetrate his side, and received also several more blows about his head, which for a moment nearly took away his senses. The ruffian then remounted his horse, but Mr Hardwick recovering, seized hold of the bridle, and assistance being at hand, the villain was taken to Congresbury Inn.

Medical assistance was soon procured, and the wounds examined by Messrs. James and Grevile, when it appeared Mr Hardwick had been shot just below the shoulder, where the ball yet remains, and a still more dangerous wound was found in his side, just below the ribs. J H Smith Piggot Esq, the nearest Magistrate, was sent for during the night, and Mr Hardwick's deposition taken, as well as other persons who witnessed the latter part of the struggle. The person of the desperate wretch was examined, and sixteen pistol balls, with gunpowder made up into cartridges, were found upon him, together with a map of England and a list of fairs, a razor, two shillings and sixpence in silver, and a few half pence. The stick or bludgeon with which he stabbed Mr Hardwick was picked up by Mr Thos Guppy, of Bristol; it is a most formidable weapon, with a spring dirk about seven inches long, and appears to have been sharpened carefully upon a hone into a double edge. A boy having noticed the man throw something into the river as he passed the bridge when taken to the inn, a search was made yesterday morning, and a double barrellled pistol was found, or rather two single - barrellled ones, securely and ingeniously tied and screwed together, and having a piece of leather standing up between them, so as to prevent the flash of one from igniting the other. One barrel had been discharged, the other appeared to have missed fire, as the pan was up and the barrel still loaded. The villain was soon recognised as Richard Hewlett, formerly of Week St. Lawrence, and who was supposed to be in America, having absconded about five years since to avoid being prosecuted for stealing horses belonging to Mr Blackburrow, of Banwell."

Farmer Hardwick lay close to death for some time but lived a further 19 years to tell the tale. He is buried at Hutton. Richard Hewlett was executed at the County Gaol at Ilchester on April 22nd 1831.



The highwayman, from a contemporary newspaper.

"Our friend Mr Marriott, the proprietor of the Taunton Courier has favoured us with the loan of the subjoined representation of Hewlett's person. We are assured by several persons, to whom this atrocious character is known, that it is faithful resemblance."

In 1871, thanks to a Mr R.A. Kinglake of Weston who started a fund, the granite cross, weighing some three tons, was erected to commemorate this extraordinary event.

The inscriptions on the Purbeck stone memorial are:

East Side

In Memory

of

Charles Capell Hardwick

of this Parish

died July 2nd 1849 aged 50 years

and was buried at Hutton

His friends erect this Monument

to record their admiration

of his character

and their regret for his loss

AD. 1871.

"Thou shalt not be afraid

for any terror by night

Nor for the arrow that flieth by day"

West Side

He was of such courage

That being attacked

By a Highwayman

On the heath in this Parish

Oct.21st 1830

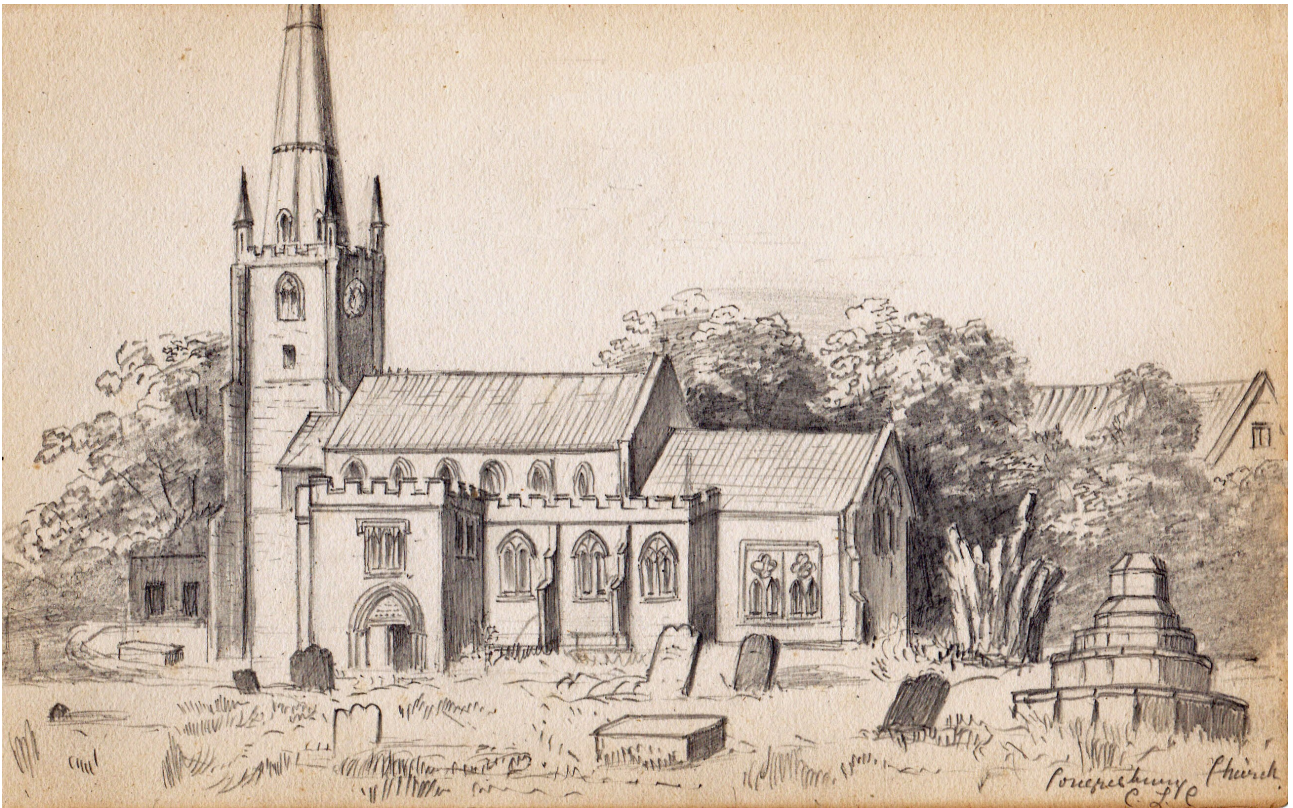
and fearfully wounded by him

He pursued his assailant

and having overtaken him

in the centre of this village

delivered him to justice



*Sketch c 1890 by C.L.C. which shows the stump of the old tree to the right of the church.
Courtesy of Congresbury History Group.*

12. St Congar's Walking Stick

Location:

Between the granite cross and the church.

"St Congar's Walking Stick" (see the legend of St Congar in the Church History section) is an ancient yew tree vandalised a few years ago. The tree was dead but held by an iron band round the beech tree which had grown on the site. The band of iron was put around the tree by a village blacksmith Archie "Thumping" Light, whose forge was in Station Road.



Near to, and just north of the east window of the church, are two other early tombs which lean together.

13. Watts and Inman Tombs

Location: Close to the east wall of the church.



Tombs of Mary Watts, 1633 and Thomas Inman, 1689.

The tomb on the left is that of Mary Watts and contains the inscription:

HEAR LYETH THE BODY OF MARY THE DAUGHTER OF ERASMUS WATTS OF THIS PARISH YEOMAN. SHE DECEASED 18th JULY 1633.

The Parish Registers show Mary Wattes, daughter of Erasmus, was buried on 22nd July 1633.

The right hand tomb is that of Thomas Inman, with the inscription:

ALSO HERE LYETH THE BODY OF THOMAS INMAN OF THIS PARISH WHO DEPARTED THIS LIFE THE 8 OF MAY IN 1689.

My breath is Corrupt, my days are Extinct, the graves are ready for me. Job 17.

The Parish Registers record that Thomas Inman was buried on the 15th May 1689.

The church registers record 5742 burials in the years 1563 to 1900. If you add to this the burials since 1900 plus those unrecorded before 1563 back to 1215 and possibly back to St Congar's time, the result is that the churchyard probably holds well over 10,000 men, women and children.



The churchyard 1997. Courtesy of Mike Bedingfield.

Photo by John Wilcox.

