

YCCCART 2023/Y6

Church of St John The Evangelist, Kenn

Part 1: Inside the church

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RESEARCH TEAM (YCCCART)**

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The South - east view of the church of St John, 2023.

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Introduction

Over the past few years because of covid and other factors YCCCART members have undertaken documentary and photographic research into several local churches. Reports (available online at www.ycccart.co.uk) have been produced on churches at Puxton, Kingston Seymour, Yatton and Wick St Lawrence

Acknowledgement

In respect of Kenn church I would like to thank the following: Julia Bush, churchwarden, for information; YCCCART members John Wilcox, David Long and Colin Campbell for photographs and invaluable assistance and Vince Russett for inspiring this project, assistance, and final editing.

SITE LOCATION

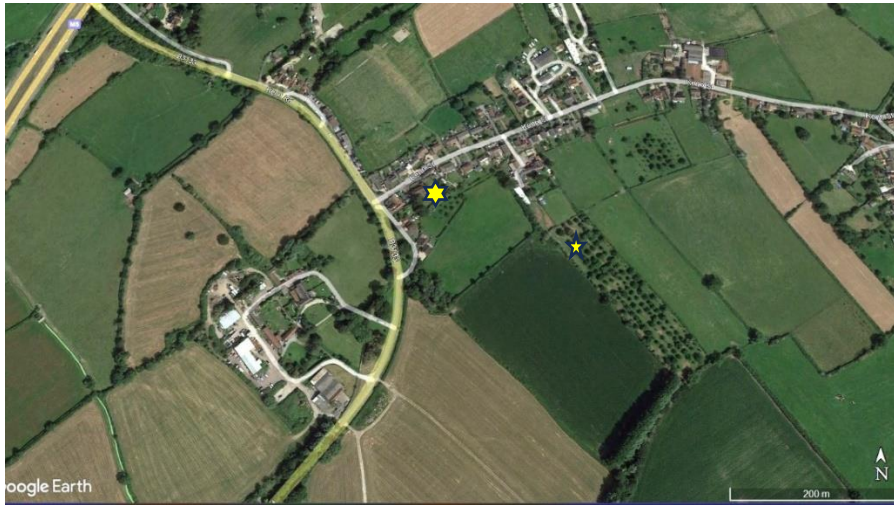


Fig 1: Location of church indicated by yellow star.

St John's parish church stands at ST4159268976, on the south side of Kenn Street, in the village and parish of Kenn, in North Somerset, approximately 2.8km from Clevedon Triangle.



Fig 2: Western entrance to church.

"as pretty a row of cottages as ever led to a church door."
Somerset. Arthur Mee.

Land use and geology

The church is situated in a Christian burial ground, and is open to the public every day: 8.30/9am to 5pm; daylight hours in the winter. It is a Grade II* Listed structure (LN1136680), while the cross in the churchyard is also a Scheduled Monument (LN1015515) and is a Grade II Listed structure (LN1320974).

The site stands on an area of glacial gravels that underlies the whole modern village, and forms a slight ridge about 1m higher than the surrounding alluvium of the Northmarsh.

Historical & archaeological context

Kenn, the name of the local manor / parish , is a reminder of pre-English languages once used in England, surviving today as modern Cornish and Welsh. The name seems to be cognate with modern Welsh *caint* (obviously, no spelling survives from pre-Norman England), DB *Chen* (1086) meaning something like 'the winding one' and referring to the old, pre-medieval course of the Kenn River, accurately described as 'winding' (YCCCART 2022/Y3; YCCCART 2022/Y10).

In the general absence of any reliable pre-Conquest documentary evidence for this part of the Northmarsh, the earliest known reference to Kenn is indeed Domesday Book, although it should be borne in mind that this document is largely concerned with taxable assets in local manors. For example, it quotes Kenn as possessing 'one serf / slave / servant', meaning one man and (presumably) his family as the occupant(s) of the manor. In opposition to this assessment, at the time of the Inclosure of Kenn Moor c1815, there were no less than 17 'Old Auster' tenements in Kenn with common rights on the Moor: the term Old Auster is directly linked in Somerset to pre-Norman landholdings (Lane 2012); clearly, Kenn was larger and more important than implied by Domesday, with its well-established disdain for pastoral farming (and especially common grazings): indeed, it seems a fair question as to why a chapel with recognisable Romanesque elements would be built to supply the religious needs of one family at all.

It is noticeable (and important) that the chapel at Kenn was always a daughter church to Yatton: the intimate relationships between the two manors are exposed in both the unusually labile boundaries between the two (so that, for example, for most of its working life, Kenn Decoy Pool was in the parish of Yatton) and the mingled execution of Common Rights from both manors in Kenn Moor.

Such relationships virtually always point to the derivation of both manors from a larger, earlier estate. While exact details remain to be worked out, this relationship of Yatton and Kenn (along with, for example, that of Congresbury and Wick St Lawrence, or of Wraxall with Nailsea and (Flax) Bourton) and with the various Common Rights / Old Austers recorded at Parliamentary Inclosures, indicates something of an earlier political landscape in the Northmarsh.

Domesday book records that Geoffrey de Montbrai (Mowbray), the Bishop of Coutances had acquired the Manor of Kenn. Unusually, however, the name of the pre-Norman lord ('TRE') is not recorded; in view of the close relationship between this manor and Yatton, it seems likely to have been John 'the Dane', the pre-Norman lord of Yatton.

The manor gave its name to a locally prominent family, the Kens / Kenns (the name is spelled both ways), who were in Kenn from about 1150 to the 16th century, and from which family Thomas Kenn was appointed Bishop of Bath and Wells in 1684.

Robert Kenn died in 1453 and much of his estate went to James, Earl of Wiltshire who was beheaded in 1461. A core part of the estate was then held by Isabel, the widow of Robert Kenn until her son John came of age.

John Kenn (1450 to 1504) married Elizabeth Newton, daughter of Sir John Newton. Sir John's grandson Christopher Kenn in 1575 was Sheriff of Somerset and in 1591 JP for the County of Somerset. He died in 1593 (see below).

Florence Stalling was Christopher's wife whose daughter Elizabeth Kenn married the 1st Lord Poulett of Hinton St George, through which marriage the manor passed to him. He died in 1649.

John Collinson in 1791 stated that John Earl Poulett of Hinton St George is the present possessor of Kenn Manor, except for one farm. The living was a curacy in the deanery of Redcliffe and Bedminster and is a chapel appendant to Yatton. The Rev Thomas Vincent was the present incumbent in 1791.

The church is currently in the Bath and Wells diocese and the living is a perpetual curacy, in the patronage of the Vicar of Yatton.

The close links with Yatton over the centuries is illustrated by the example of Florence, third wife of Christopher Kenn. Her 1620 will includes: *'I give and devise the Church House of Yatton for the better relief and maintenance of the poor.'* This was the late medieval building which still survives, with many medieval features intact, built into the north-east corner of Yatton churchyard.

Florence's second husband was Sir Nicholas Staling. His memorial and that of Christopher Kenn is described later in this publication.

A major rebuilding program commenced in 1861 led to the rebuilding of both nave and chancel in its present form. This rebuilding also resulted in the Norman tower acquiring a later roof.

Appendix's A and B contain a newspaper account of the 1861 rebuilding and the Historic England Listing.

INSIDE THE CHURCH

THE NAVE



Fig 3: The nave from the chancel.



Fig 4: The font.

Historic England describes the font as:

“octagonal stone font circular stem with 4 shafts, possible C14.”

The cover is of later date.

South Wall



Fig 5: The south door area.



Fig 6: The south door.

The oak door was restored during the 19th century and is considered of some age.



Fig 7: Right of the door and right above the south door.

Holes to the right of the door may well be part of the original door frame which the Listing (See Appendix B) suggests is 15th century. Could this be in part the remains of security bars?

Above the door arch inscribed in chalk on the stone are three crowns and 20 20. This was inserted as part of a drama event celebrating the three wise men.

Note the strange asymmetry of the stones immediately above the door.



St John's Church, Kenn 2023

Fig 8: Baptism and Cradle Rolls.



PHOTO EDIT

To the right of the door are baptism and cradle rolls as above and below. They all record baptisms.



Above the south door is a memorial to Sir Nicholas Staling.

Fig 10: The Staling monument.



Above the tablet is the coat of arms of the Staling family (gules, three escallops in bend argent, on a chief of the second a martlet sable).

Fig 11: The coat of arms.

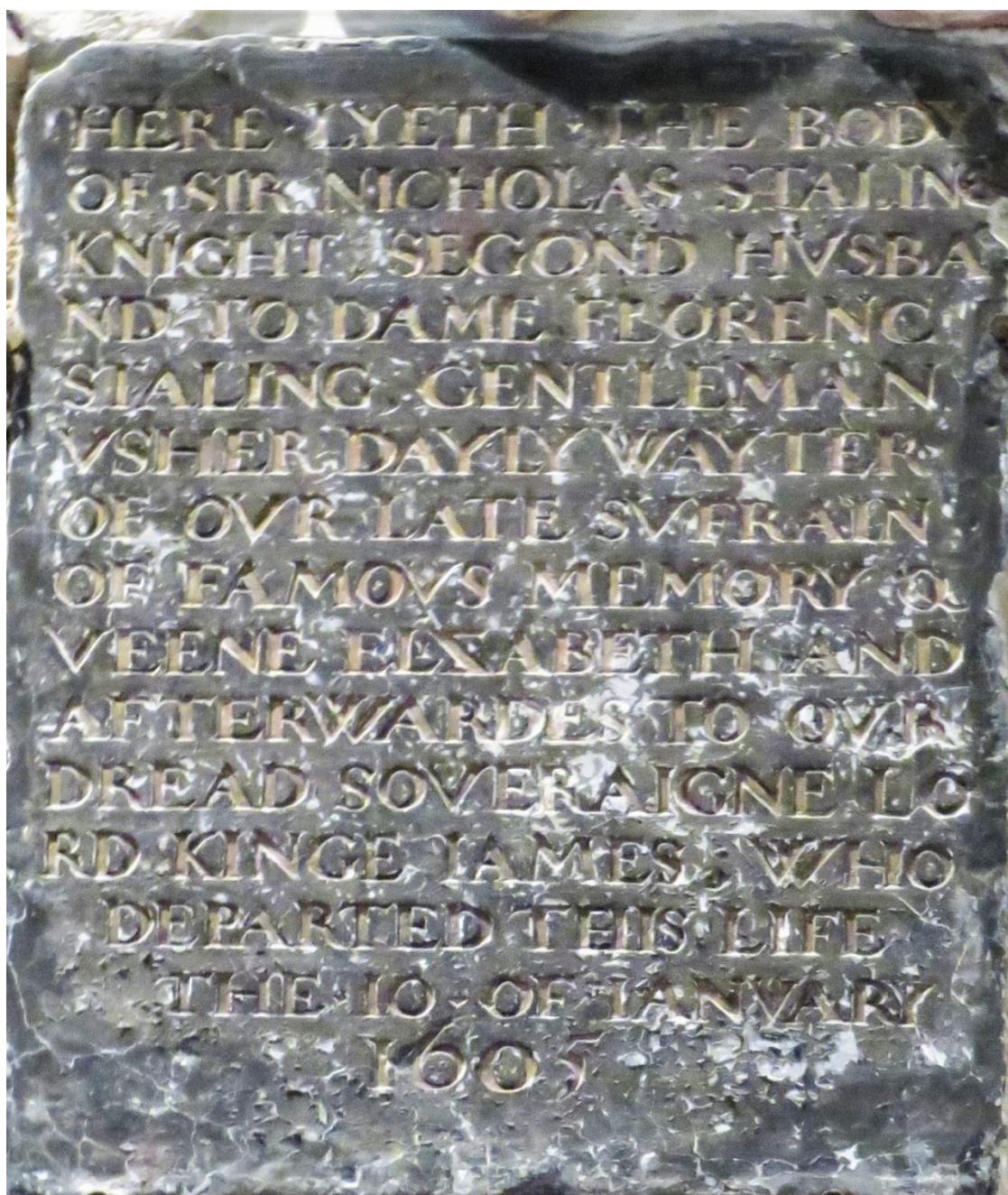


Fig 12: The inscription.

The inscription reads:

HERE LYETH THE BODY / OF SIR NICHOLAS STALING / KNIGHT SECOND HVSBA/
 ND TO DAME FLORENC / STALING GENTLEMAN / USHER DAYLY WAYTER / OF OVR
 LATE SVFRAIN / OF FAMOUS MEMORY Q/VEENE ELZABETH AND /
 AFTERWARDES TO OVR DREAD SOVERAIGNE LO/RD KINGE JAMES WHO / DEPARTED
 THIS LIFE / THE 10 OF JANVARY/1605



A plaque at the east end of the Nave's south wall remembers those lost in the 1914-1918 war.

Fig 13: Location of plaque.

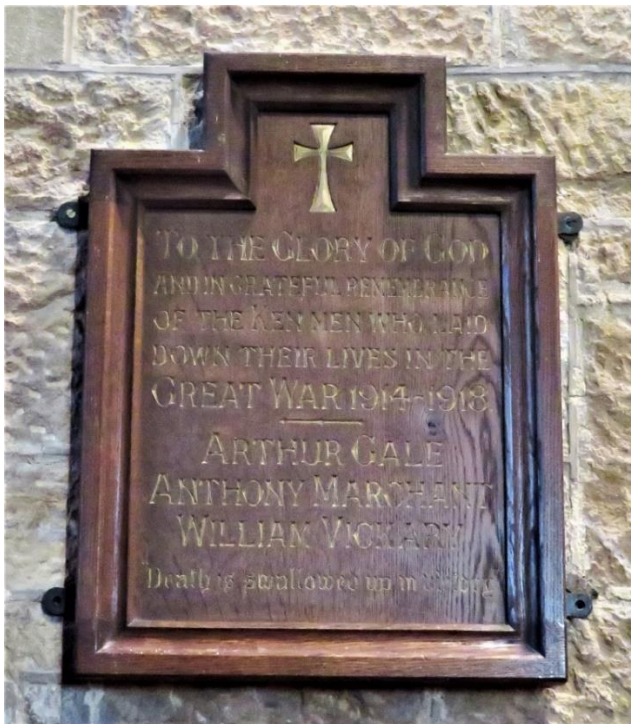


Fig 14: The Great War plaque.

TO THE GLORY OF GOD
AND IN GRATEFUL REMEMBRANCE
OF THE KEN MEN WHO LAID
DOWN THEIR LIVES IN THE
GREAT WAR 1914-1918
ARTHUR GALE
ANTHONY MARCHANT
WILLIAM VICKARY
Death is swallowed up in victory

(1 CORINTHIANS 15:54) WWW.BIBLEGATEWAY.COM/VERSE/EN/1%20CORINTHIANS%2015%3A54

North Wall

The north wall contains the following plaque.

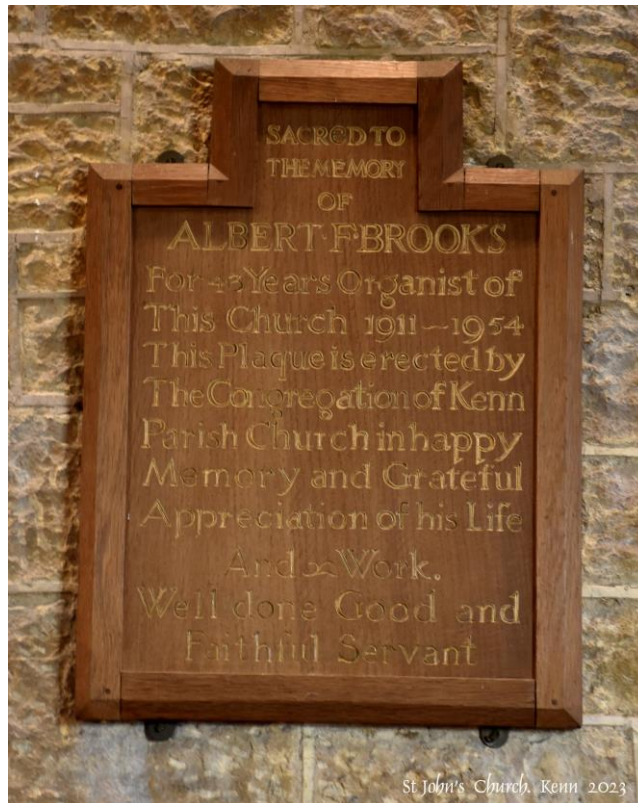


Fig 15: The north wall plaque.

SACRED TO THE MEMORY
OF
ALBERT F BROOKS
For 43 Years Organist of
This Church 1911 – 1954
This Plaque is erected by
The Congregation of Kenn
Parish Church in happy
Memory and Grateful
Appreciation of his Life
And Work.
Well Done Good and
Faithful servant

To the right of the plaque is a stain glass window



The nave has four identical stained-glass windows. Two on the south and north walls.

Fig 16: One of the nave's stained-glass windows.



Fig 17: Plaque to left of the pulpit.

The plaque to the left of the pulpit commemorates Samuel G Dyer. He was Churchwarden for 37 years and his family restored the east gate.

East Wall

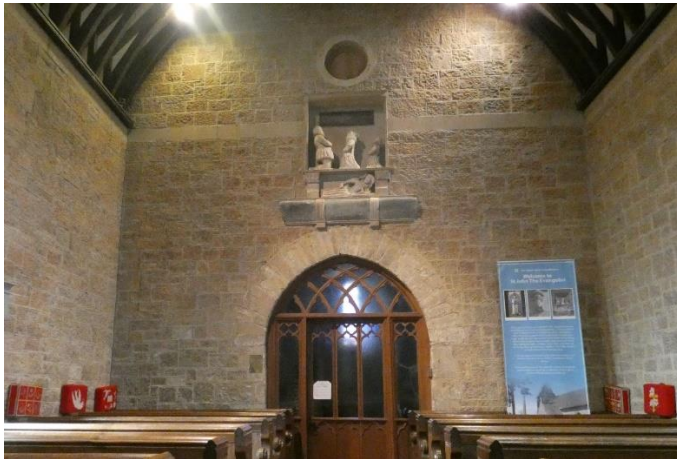


Fig 18: The east wall.

The monument to Christopher Kenn above the west door was moved from the chancel during the 1861 rebuilding.

Christopher Kenn was the last of the Kenn family who occupied the Manor of Kenn from about 1150 to the early 1600s. Christopher had no son and so the estate passed by his daughter's marriage to the Poulett family of Hinton St George, near Crewkerne.



Fig 19: The Christopher Kenn monument.



Fig 20: Close up of monument

Facing Christopher Kenn are two daughters and beneath is his wife Florence who holds a book in one hand. She once held a baby in the other hand (now lost). An inscription is above the figures.



Fig 21: Close up of the inscription.

The inscription reads:

'HEREUNDER LYETH THE BODY OF CRISTOPHER KENN / ESQVIER WHO DYED THE 23 DAY OF IANVARY 1593 / AND ALSO THE BODY OF DAME FLORANC STALLINGE HIS / WIFE WHO ERECTED THIS MONVMENT AND DYED THE [--] DAY / OF [----] BY WHOM THE SAID CRISTOPHER HAD ISSVE / 2 DAVGHTERS MARGERET & ELZABETH MARGERET MA/ RIED TO WILLIAM GYYES OF ELMOORE ESQVIER ELZABETH / MARRIED TO IHON: POVLET OF GORGHINTON ESQVIER'



Fig 22: Brass plaque by left of door.

This plaque to the left of the tower door commemorates the legacies of Kathleen Cawston and Jack Hanson.



Fig 23: Brass plaque by right of door.

Right of the tower door is this memorial plaque to Francis Tambling, vicar 1954 to 1962.



Fig 24: The nave roof.

The Nave roof dates from the 19th century.



Fig 25: The nave pews.

The 19th century pews.

Inside the Tower



Fig 26: Inside the tower.



Fig 27: The tower's stained-glass window.

A descendent of the Kenn family, Bishop Thomas Ken (who held the See of Bath and Wells 1685-1690) is depicted in the stained-glass window.

THE CHANCEL

The Historic England Listing records the chancel as circa 1300, but according to Pevsner and newspaper accounts only the restored east window is of this date.

North wall



Fig 28: The pulpit.

The 19th century stone pulpit is on marble colonnettes



Fig 29: The I H S inscription.

The central inscription IHS is surround by the words "Lo, I am with you always even unto the end of the world".



Fig 30: The carved medallions on the pulpit.

The carved medallions are the symbols of the four evangelists St Matthew, the kneeling angel; St John, the Eagle; St Luke, the winged ox; St Mark, the Lion; St Luke and the winged ox.



Fig 31: The memorial cabinet pulpit and organ.

In front of the pulpit is a memorial book in a wooden display cabinet. The latter has the inscription below.



IN MEMORY OF
ARCHIBALD GRIFFIN
THIS TABLE HAS BEEN GIVEN BY
HIS RELATIVES AND FRIENDS 1964

Fig 32: The memorial cabinet and inscription.



Fig 33: The east wall



Fig 34: Above the east window.



Fig 35: East window and inscription.

The restored c1300 east window has the following inscription:

TO THE GLORY OF GOD / AND IN LOVING MEMORY/ OF FRANCES STILL WHO
DEPARTED THIS LIFE / 8TH DEC 1876 AGED 70 R I P ERECTED BY HER DAUGHTERS

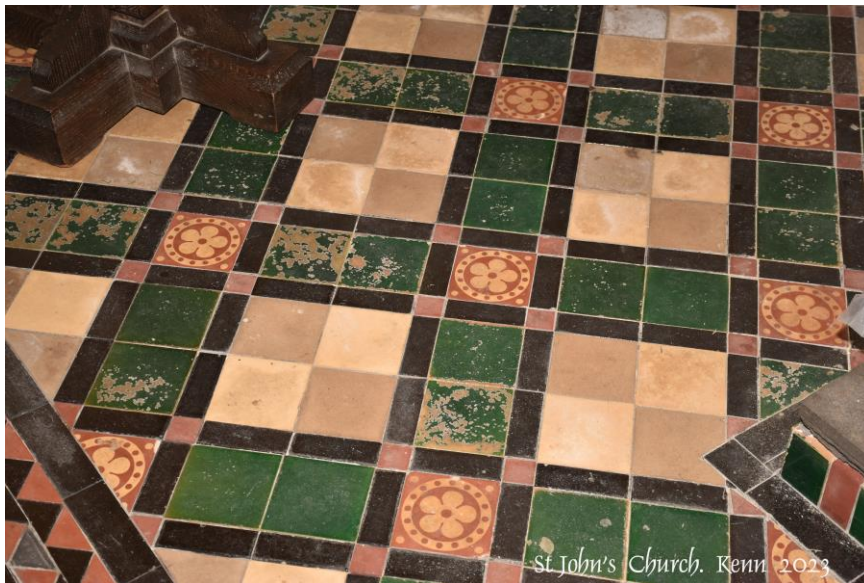


Fig 36: Floor with Minton tiles.

Minton tiles were laid during the 19th century restoration.



Fig 37: The eagle lectern.

South wall

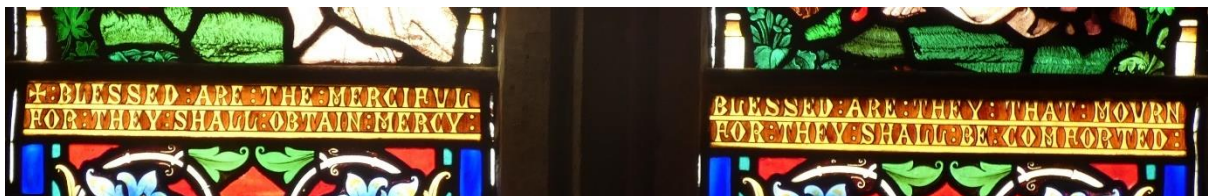


Fig 38: The stained-glass memorial to John Acres.

The stained-glass window on the south wall of the chancel has a brass plaque below it with the inscription:

To the **G**lory of God and in memory of **J**ohn **A**crs who died Decr 1st 1854. Also of Margaret / his wife who died **J**uly 21st 1860. **D**edicated by their son the Incumbent **AD** 1862

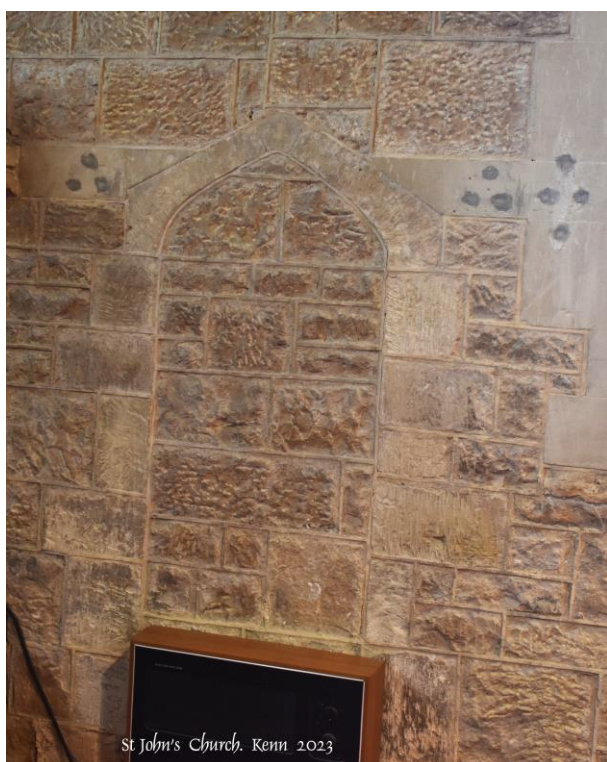


Fig 39: The blocked priest's door.

The door allowed priests to enter the chancel without going through the nave.



Fig 40: The 19th century chancel roof.



Fig 41: The four oak bosses.

It is said that these bosses on the north and south wall were cut from wood from Keynsham church and are thought to be at least 500 years old when craved.

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Appendix A

Western Daily Press - Wednesday 30 April 1862

THE RESTORATION OF KENN CHURCH.

In April of last year a contract was obtained for newly roofing, flooring, seating, and generally refitting this church. On removing the roof the walls were found to be in so unsound a state that it was deemed necessary to rebuild them, and a contract was obtained for this work—the parish willingly granting a rate for the entire expense, in addition to the rate previously granted towards the expense of the general repairs. Subsequently vestry was added, and various other works were from time-to-time undertaken with a view to the further beautifying and adornment of the church. The church, which is foundation of the early part of the 13th century, had retained but few traces of its original character. Among those remaining, however, may be mentioned the tower and the font. The tower retained, concealed under a modern timber and tile roof, the two lowest courses of an ancient stone, four-sided, pyramidal capping, which of itself was sufficient from the few examples remaining to confer upon the church an interest which would not otherwise have attached to it. This has been restored, and has of course supplied the key note, so to speak, of the entire restoration, subject to such modifications as were considered necessary to harmonise the more recent parts of the structure. The walls have been faced internally with the yellow magnesian limestone from Clevedon, the gift of Sir Arthur Elton, Bart., with colonnettes of old red sandstone, the gift of Sir William Miles, Bart. The whole of the windows, with the exception of the east window, have been fitted with stained glass by Bell, of Bristol. The east window is reserved for a special contribution memory of Bishop Kenn. The west window contains a figure of Bishop Kenn, from original painting in the possession of Dr. Markland, and is the gift of Mr Bell. The benches, stalls, lectern, and Communion railing are of oak, and the pulpit of stone, with superfine marble colonnettes. The reredos is flanked with serpentine marble colonnettes and filled in with a carved cross and diaper. The chancel is paved with encaustic tiles, by Minton; and the remainder of the church with red and black Staffordshire tiles. Freestone ashlar bead courses have been introduced in the walls for the reception of illuminated inscriptions. The monument to Christopher Kenn has been restored and fixed over the tower arch. The work has been executed by the contractor, Thos. Hartree, of Clevedon, under the directions of Messrs Fosters and Wood, of Bristol, architects. The carving was executed by Derail. The entire cost will amount to somewhat under £900.

Courtesy of the British Newspaper Archive (www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk).

Image © Reach PLC. Image created courtesy of THE BRITISH LIBRARY BOARD.

APPENDIX B

Listing of Kenn church

KENN C.P. KENN STREET (south side) ST 46 NW 5/40 Church of St. John The Evangelist 11.10.61

G.V. II*

Parish church. Tower said to be of Norman origin, chancel c. 1300, south door of C15, rest mostly C19 rebuilding and restoration. Rubble, limestone dressings and quoins, plain tiled roofs with raised coped verges and crestings, stepped stone pyrammidal roof to tower (of later construction). West tower, nave, south porch, chancel, north vestry. Perpendicular style, mostly of C19. Tower in one stage, has battered walls, pointed arched lancets at top all sides except east, 2 lower lancets to west, lowest one with scalloped stonework at head, roof has fleur de lys at corners and cross finial. 2-bay nave has to north two 3-light C19 windows with hood mould and mask stops, 2 similar windows to south and central gabled porch with cross finial, moulded stilted arched opening with hood mould and mask stops, lancet to each side, roof of common rafters, arched- braces, collar and collar purlin, similar inner door opening with Perpendicular style double doors with raised fillets and studs. Chancel has 2-light east window with cusped ogee heads and Y-tracery, pointed arch and relieving arch, 2-light south window with cusped ogee heads, cusped upper tracery, square head and stopped hood mould, blocked priest's door with 4-centred arched head, cross finial. Vestry has 2-light trefoil-headed window in gable end to north, pointed segmental-headed door to right in lean-to and similar door to left. Interior: low pointed arched opening to tower with blocked circular opening above; nave has roof of common rafters, arched-braces, collars and collar purlin, at junction with chancel, shafts to sides with foliate capitals, chancel has roof of similar construction divided into 3 bays, principal arched-braces rising from foliate corbels on masks, moulded principals with carved bosses at junctions, some possibly re-used. Nave has pointed segmental upper head to south door, chancel has C19 stone reredos and wide pointed arch to vestry; vestry has common rafter and collar roof. Fittings: C19 stone pulpit on marble colonnettes in nave; C19 pews in chancel with poppy-head bench-ends; octagonal stone font in nave on circular stem with 4 shafts, possible C14. Monuments in nave: tablet to Sir Nicholas Staling, gentleman usher at court of Elizabeth I, with shield of arms, 1605; monument to Sir Christopher Kenn, 1593 with 3 kneeling figures above a semi-reclining female figure; C16, C17 and C18 ledger stones in porch. (Sources: Pevsner, N.: Buildings of England: North Somerset and Bristol. 1958).

Listing NGR: ST4159368975

<https://britishlistedbuildings.co.uk/101136680-church-of-st-john-the-evangelist-kenn>