

**YCCCART 2023/Y8**

**Church of St John The Evangelist, Kenn**

**Part 2: Outside the church (including the south porch)**

**YATTON, CONGRESBURY, CLAVERHAM AND CLEEVE ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
RESEARCH TEAM (YCCCART)**

General Editor: Vince Russett



*The south side of the church.*

## CONTENTS

3	Introduction Acknowledgement
4	Site Location
5	Land Use and Geology Historical & Archaeological Context
7	Outside the Church
41	References
42	Appendix 1 Listing of Cross at Kenn Church

## **Introduction**

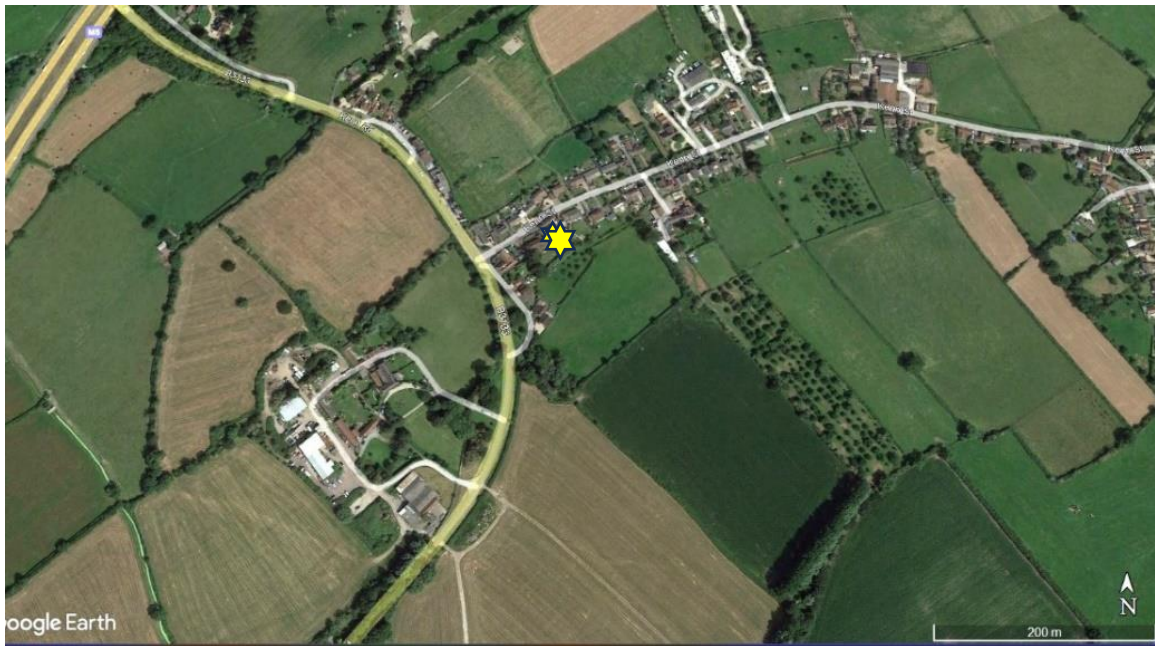
Over the past few years because of Covid and other factors YCCCART members have undertaken documentary and photographic research into several local churches. Reports (available online at [www.ycccart.co.uk](http://www.ycccart.co.uk)) have been produced on churches at Puxton, Kingston Seymour, Yatton 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: The western entrance to the 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.

*\*TRE as 'In King Edward (the Confessor's) time'. King Harold was ignored by the compilers of Domesday Book'*

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.

## Outside the church



*Fig 3. 2023 View of the south and east of the church.*



*Fig 4: Sketch by John Buckler 1826.*

The 2023 view (Fig 3 above) and Buckler's sketch, prior to the 1861 renovation (Fig 4 above) are very similar except for the nave / chancel roof line and tower roof.



## The tower



*Fig 5: Comparison of tower roof area on sketch by John Buckler 1826 (left) and current view of tower roof area.*

The current tower is described in the English Heritage Listing as:

'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.'

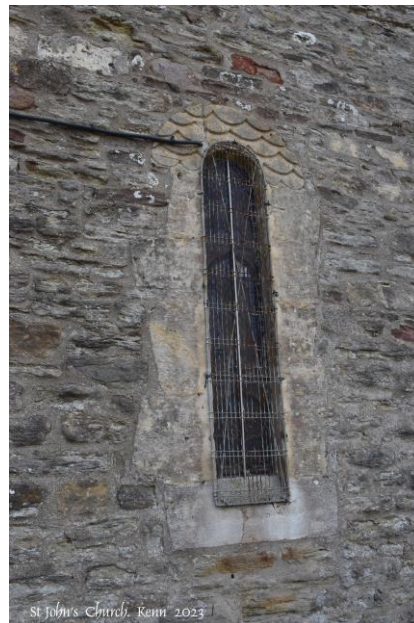
Following the 1861 renovation the nave roof line was raised blocking the eastern lancet window.

### \* *Lancet window*

Note: The 1861 renovation also reoccupied the previous roofline that had been obvious previously on the tower. This clearly marked the former top of the previous thatched roof, so indicates something of the previous structure. The site of the window would have been blocked by such thatch, so it must be either later or much earlier. Does this imply that there was a pre-thatch tiled roof?



*Fig 6. The tower from the north*



*Fig 7. The west side of the tower.*

The two lancets on the west of the tower. The lowest (right in Fig 6 right) has scalloped stone above it and is Romanesque in date (probably 12th century).

## The South Porch



*Fig 8: The inner door of the porch.*



*Fig 9: Carved heads either side of the inner door.*

The 15<sup>th</sup> century arch to the inner door is terminated left and right by the heads shown above in Fig 9.





*Fig 10: Inner right hand door frame to porch entrance. The stone block on the right contains a number 2 on its side.*

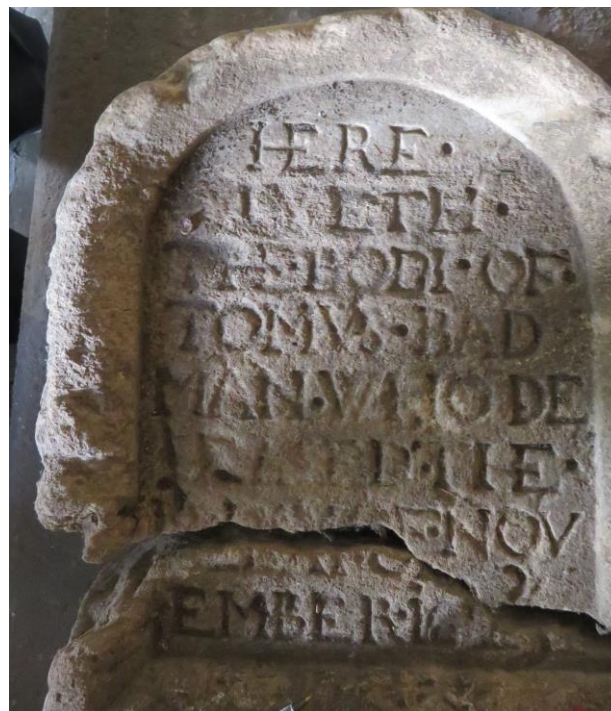


*Fig 11: The rotated number 2 on the stone block*

The east side of the porch contains this memorial with the inscription below.



*Fig 12: The gravestone resting on the eastern stone bench of the porch.*



*Fig 13: The inscription*

The inscription reads:

HERE / LYETH / THE BODI OF / TOMVS BAD / MAN WHO DE / CEASED THE / 18  
DAY OF NOV / EMBER 1623' (underlines indicate ligatured letters)



The floor of the porch contains four memorial slabs / gravestones.

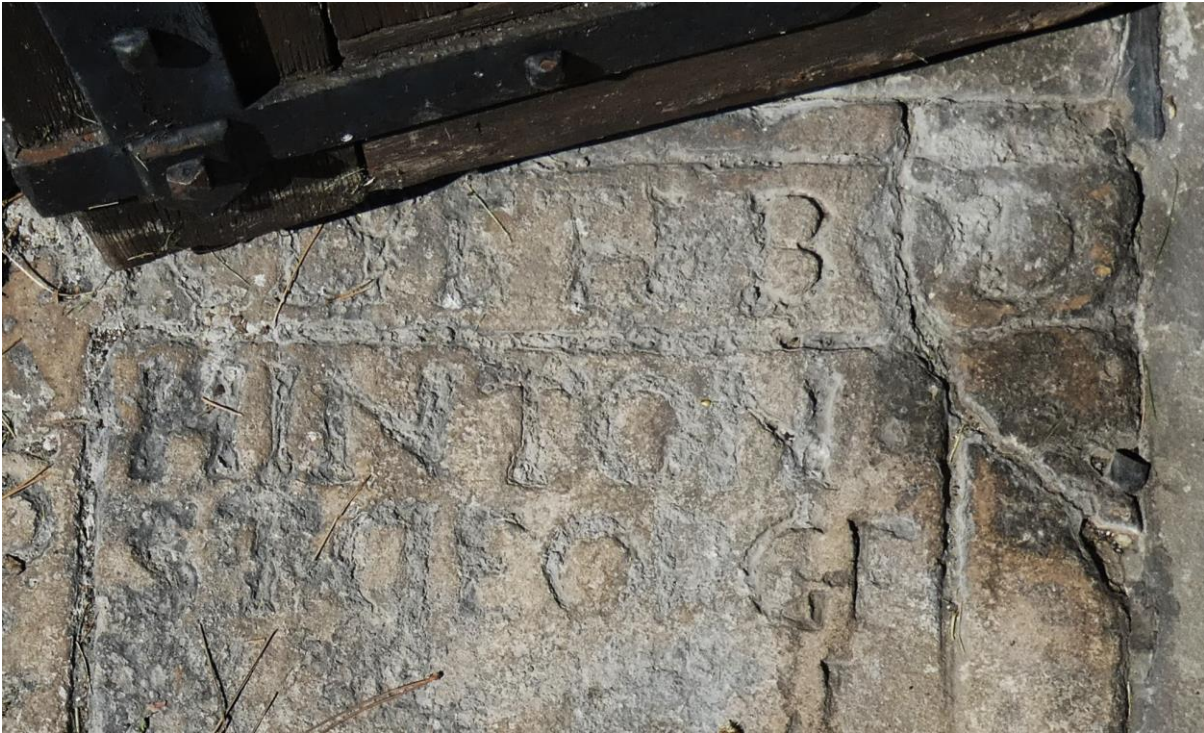
Just inside entrance door



*Fig 14: The first gravestone inside the entrance door*

The first tomb slab is of freestone and heavily worn.





*Fig 15: Close up of part of the inscription showing HINTON ST GEORGE.*



*Fig 16: Close up of part of the inscription showing TER OF IOHN.*

The inscription is said by Collinson to read: " Here lyeth the body of Elizabeth, the daughter of John lord Poulet baron of Hinton-St.-George, who departed this life the 28th of July 1628."

Next gravestone towards north

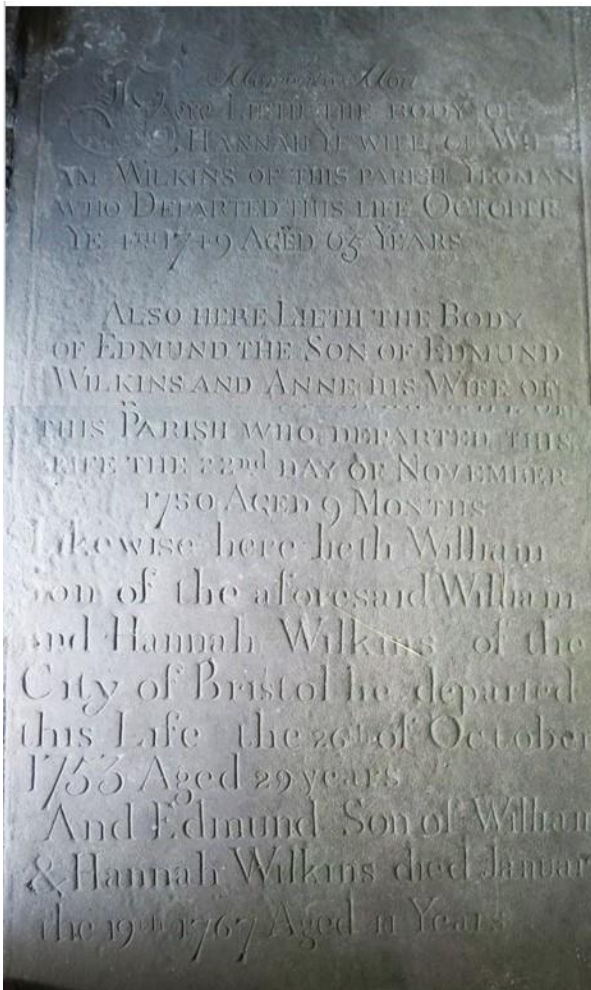


Fig 17: The inscription on the memorial.

The gravestone reads:

'*Memento Mori* / Here LIETH THE BODY OF /  
HANNAH YE WIFE OF WILLI / AM WILKINS OF  
THIS PARISH YEOMAN / WHO DEPARTED THIS  
LIFE OCTOBER / YE 4<sup>TH</sup> 1749 AGED 65 YEARS/

ALSO HERE LIETH THE BODY / OF EDMUND  
THE SON OF EDMUND / WILKINS AND ANNE  
HIS WIFE OF / THIS PARISH WHO DEPARTED  
THIS / LIFE THE 22<sup>ND</sup> DAY OF NOVEMBER /  
1750 AGED 9 MONTHS'

'Likewise here lieth William / Son of the  
aforesaid William / and Hannah Wilkins of the /  
City of Bristol he departed / this Life the 26<sup>th</sup> of  
October / 1753 Aged 29 years /  
And Edmund Son of William / & Hannah  
Wilkins died January / the 19<sup>th</sup> 1767 Aged 11  
Years'





*Fig 18: Location of the third gravestone*



*Fig 19: Part of the third gravestone.*

The inscription is very worn but reads:

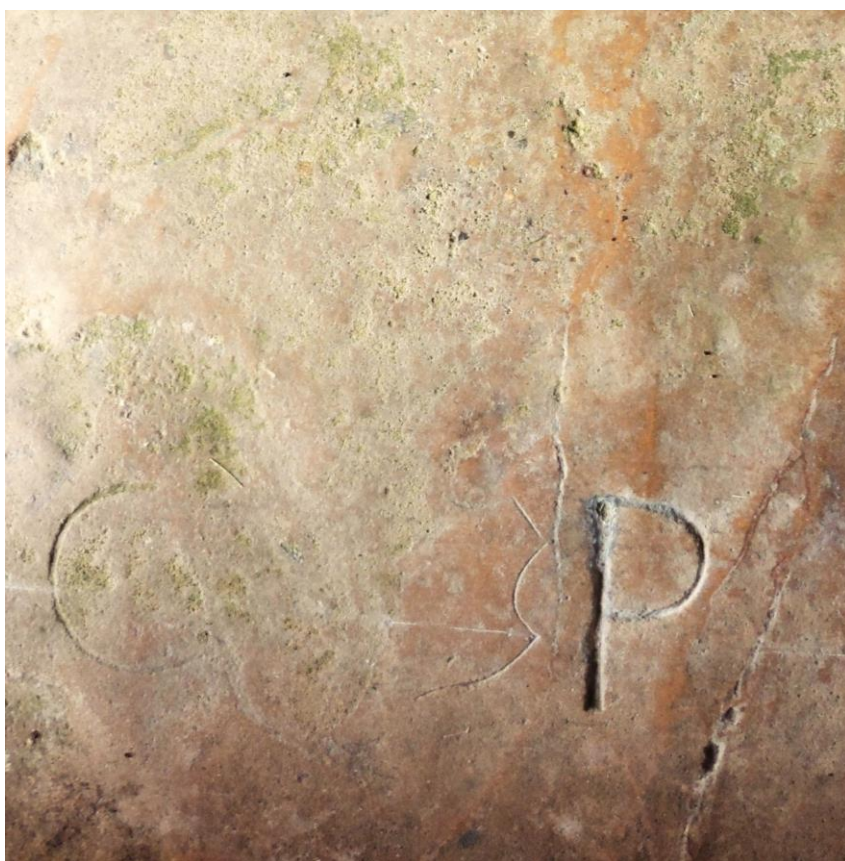
'HEARE LYETH / THE BODI (?of) IOHN A ----- Y AND IOHAN / HI(S) WIFE WHO / DECESED THE 3 DAY (OF) MARCHE 1581'

John and Jone Appery are recorded in the Kenn burial records for 1580.





*Fig 20: The section A--- Y on the slab and below the added letters from APPERY.*



*Fig 21: The western section of the gravestone.*

The western section of the gravestone contains the letters O or C and a very clear carved P.  
In addition, between the letters is the faint outline of what appears to be a crest.

Fourth gravestone (outside inner doorway)



*Fig 22: Top / inscription on the fourth slab.*

The inscription probably reads:

'HERE (RES)TETH THE / BODY OF MES~ ANN / DODDINGTON / WHO WAS BV /  
RYED THE 3<sup>D</sup> OF APRIL / ANNO 1645'





*Fig 23: Lower section of the fourth gravestone, with the family crest.*

▪





Fig 24: First World War Memorial.

The west side of the porch has a list of those who fought in the 1914-1918 war. A similar memorial was not necessary for World War 2 as all those from the village who fought returned.

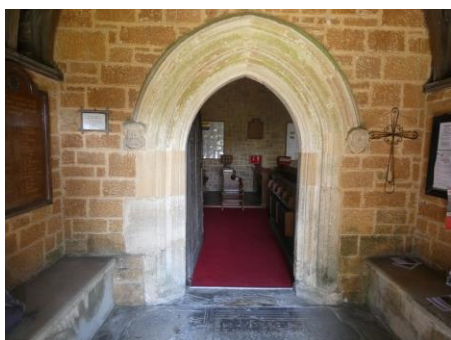


Fig 25: The inner porch door with an inscription on the left of the doorway.

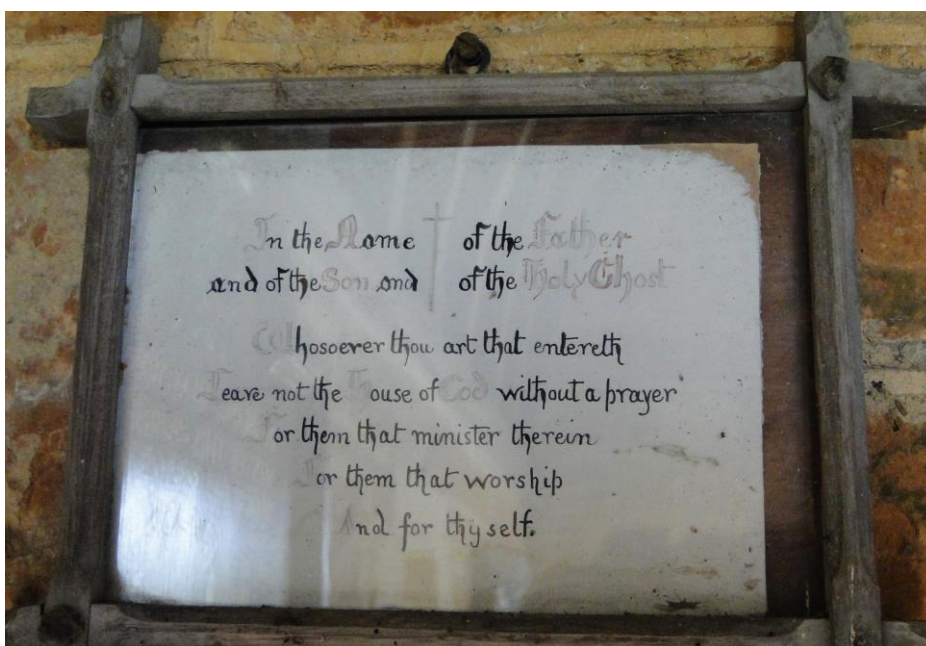


Fig 26: A prayer to the left of the inner porch door. The faded letters were probably once red.

The prayer reads:

'In the Name of the Father / and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost / Whosoever thou art that entereth / Leave not the House of God without a prayer / For them that minister therein / For them that worship / And for thyself.'



## North side



*Fig 27: East end of the north.*



*Fig 28: Window beside vestry roof.*





*Fig 29: Heads either side of window.*



*Fig 30: North side showing both windows.*



*Fig 31: North -western window with close up of stone heads.*





*Fig 32: Western wall to church and northern structure.*



*Fig 33: Plaque on the western wall.*





Fig 34: Structure (including toilet block) north of church.



Fig 35: On the structure is this list of internments.





*Fig 36: Plaque on gable.*



*Fig 37: Close up of plaque on gable.*

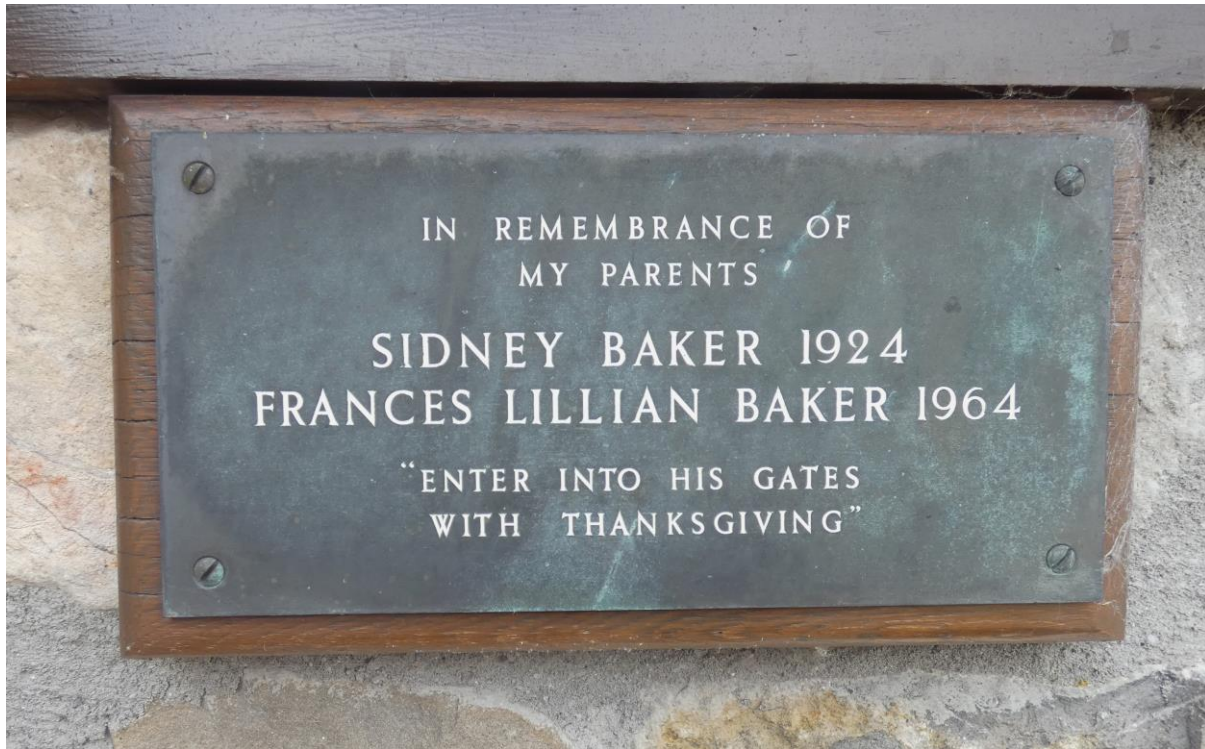


*Fig 38: Eastern side of northern building showing location of plaque.*



*Fig 39: Inscription on plaque.*





*Fig 40: Plaque on the east wall of northern building.*

## **South side**



*Fig 41: South side of church.*



*Fig 42: The churchyard cross.*

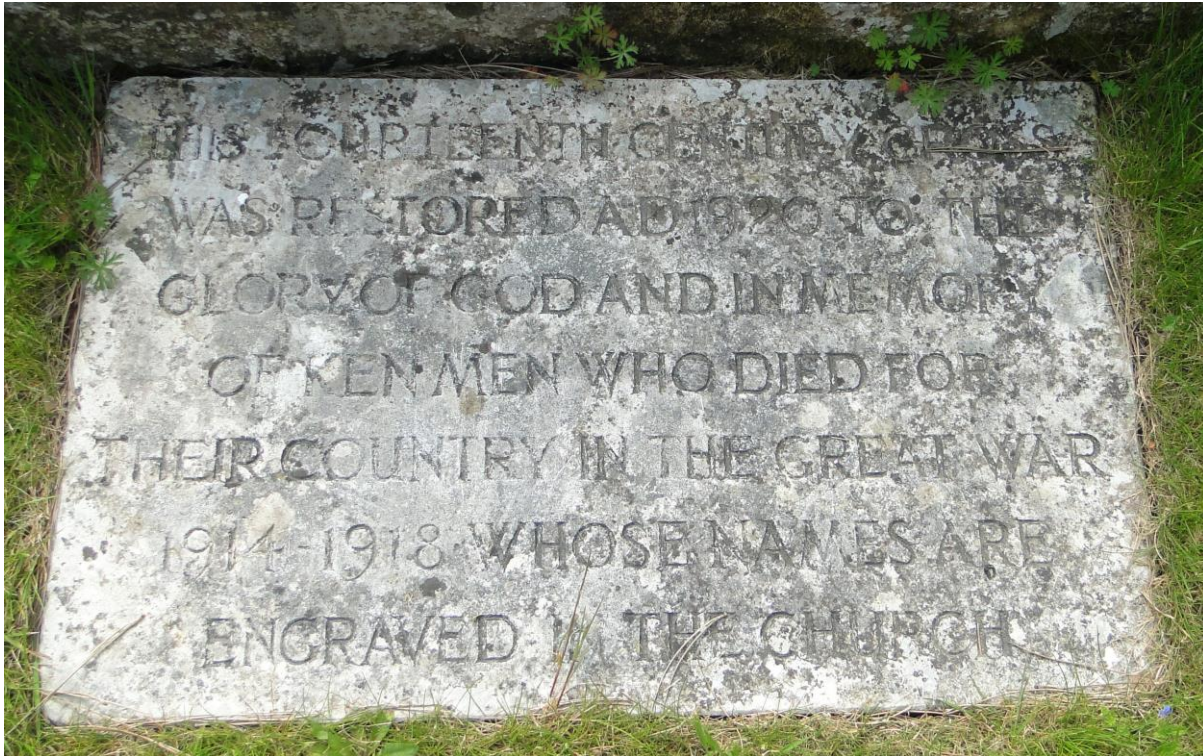
The churchyard cross probably dates to the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Made of Limestone it has an octagonal base with 4 steps, a square plinth and a cross with diamond mouldings at top of the shaft. It was restored as a memorial after 1914-18 war.

The top / head of the cross (i.e. the cross fleury that stands there today) also dates to the 1920 work: the earliest photograph from 1900 shows the old top (a hexagonal section block with pyramidal top) still in place.



*Fig 43: The plaque on the ground in front of the cross.*





*Fig 44: The inscription on the cross plaque.*

The inscription reads:

THIS FOURTEENTH CENTURY CROSS  
WAS RESTORED A D 1920 TO THE  
GLORY OF GOD AND IN MEMORY  
OF KEN MEN WHO DIED FOR  
THEIR COUNTRY IN THE GREAT WAR  
1914-1918 WHOSE NAMES ARE  
ENGRAVED IN THE CHURCH





*Fig 45: South of the church.*



*Fig 46: Window to left of porch.*





*Fig 47: Close up of window left of south porch.*



*Fig 48: Heads terminating the window arch.*





*Fig 49: The south porch.*





*Fig 50: Close up of porch showing heads.*



*Fig 51: Heads left and right terminating the porch.*





*Fig 52: South side of church showing the three windows.*



*Fig 53: Window to right of the porch.*



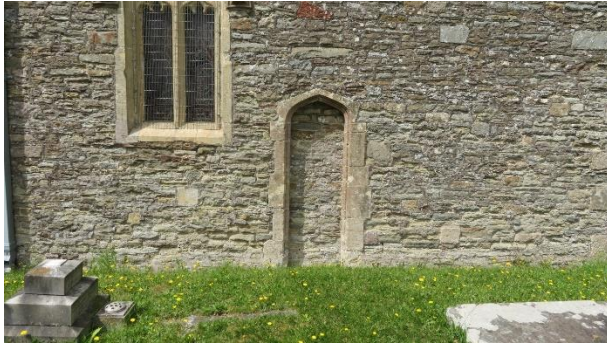


*Fig 54: Close up of window to right of the porch.*



*Fig 55: Heads left and right terminating the window arch.*





*Fig 56: Above and right the blocked doorway.*

The doorway was blocked during the 1861 restorations. It would have enabled the priest to enter the chancel without having to go through the nave.





*Fig 57: The east end of the church.*



*Fig 58: The eastern gateway post contains a plaque.*



*Fig 59: The inscription on the plaque.*

The inscription reads:

In memory of  
Samuel Dyer, late of Kenn Court  
37 years as Church warden.  
many years as Chairman of  
Kenn parish council and Village Hall committee

The east gate was replaced by  
his family and friends as a mark of affection and  
thanks for his life and service to Kenn



## REFERENCES

Collinson John, 1791	The history and antiquities of the county of Somerset. Volume 3. page 392
Foyle Anthony & Pevsner Nicholas, 2011	THE BUILDINGS OF ENGLAND SOMERSET NORTH AND BRISTOL
Mee Arthur (Editor) 1949	SOMERSET, Page 233
Rutter John, 1828	NORTH WESTERN SOMERSET, Page 66
Somerset Record Society, 1994	SIR STEPHEN GLYNNE'S CHURCH NOTES FOR SOMERSET  Page 188  16 <sup>th</sup> August 1862
Steed Christopher, 2011	Let the Stones Talk  ISBN 978-1-4567-7687-9
<b>Web Sites, 2023</b>	
Ancestry UK	<a href="http://www.ancestry.co.uk">www.ancestry.co.uk</a>
British Listed Buildings	<a href="https://britishlistedbuildings.co.uk/101136680-church-of-st-john-the-evangelist-kenn">https://britishlistedbuildings.co.uk/101136680-church-of-st-john-the-evangelist-kenn</a>
Kenn Village.	The Church of St John the Evangelist. A Brief History of the Parish Church. <a href="https://kennvillage.co.uk/home-2/history-project/st-john-the-evangelist-church/a-quick-tour-of-the-church/">https://kennvillage.co.uk/home-2/history-project/st-john-the-evangelist-church/a-quick-tour-of-the-church/</a>  Re-Opening of Ken Church May 3rd 1862 <a href="https://kennvillage.co.uk/home-2/history-project/st-john-the-evangelist-church/2556-2/">https://kennvillage.co.uk/home-2/history-project/st-john-the-evangelist-church/2556-2/</a>

## **APPENDIX 1**

### **HISTORIC ENGLAND LISTING OF CROSS**

Heritage Category:  
Listed Building  
Grade:  
II  
List Entry Number:  
1320974  
Date first listed:  
20-Jan-1986  
List Entry Name:

CROSS IN THE CHURCHYARD ABOUT 6 METRES SOUTH OF NAVE OF CHURCH  
OF ST JOHN THE EVANGELIST

KENN C.P. KENN STREET (south side) ST 46 NW 5/41 Cross in the churchyard  
about 6 metres south of nave of Church of G.V. St. John The Evangelist II

Churchyard cross. Probably C14, restored as memorial after 1914-18 war.  
Limestone. Octagonal base with 4 steps, square plinth, cross with diamond  
mouldings at top of shaft.

Listing NGR: ST4160068964

Legacy System number:  
33706  
Legacy System:  
LBS

<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1320974>