

YCCART 2020/Y9

St Lawrence Church, Wick St Lawrence

Outside the Church

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

General Editor: Vince Russett



Introduction

This is my fourth church publication. Previous churches recorded were Congresbury, Kingston Seymour and Puxton. The relevant reports are online at <http://www.ycccart.co.uk>.

I was considering the church at Wick St Lawrence, then Covid 19 hit. Action has accordingly been restricted to the the outside of the church and been inhibited by a lack of access to documents.

'The dykes do their best to cut it off from its neighbours; but there is a treasure in its church worth every twist and turn of the way.'

The Kings's England. Arthur Mee, Somerset.

YCCART

Yatton, Congresbury, Claverham and Cleeve Archaeological Research Team (YCCART) is one of a number of community archaeology teams across northern Somerset, formerly supported by the North Somerset Council Development Management Team. Our objective is to undertake archaeological fieldwork to enable a better understanding and management of the heritage of the area while recording and publishing the activities and locations of the research carried out. For more information please visit <http://www.ycccart.co.uk/>

Acknowledgements

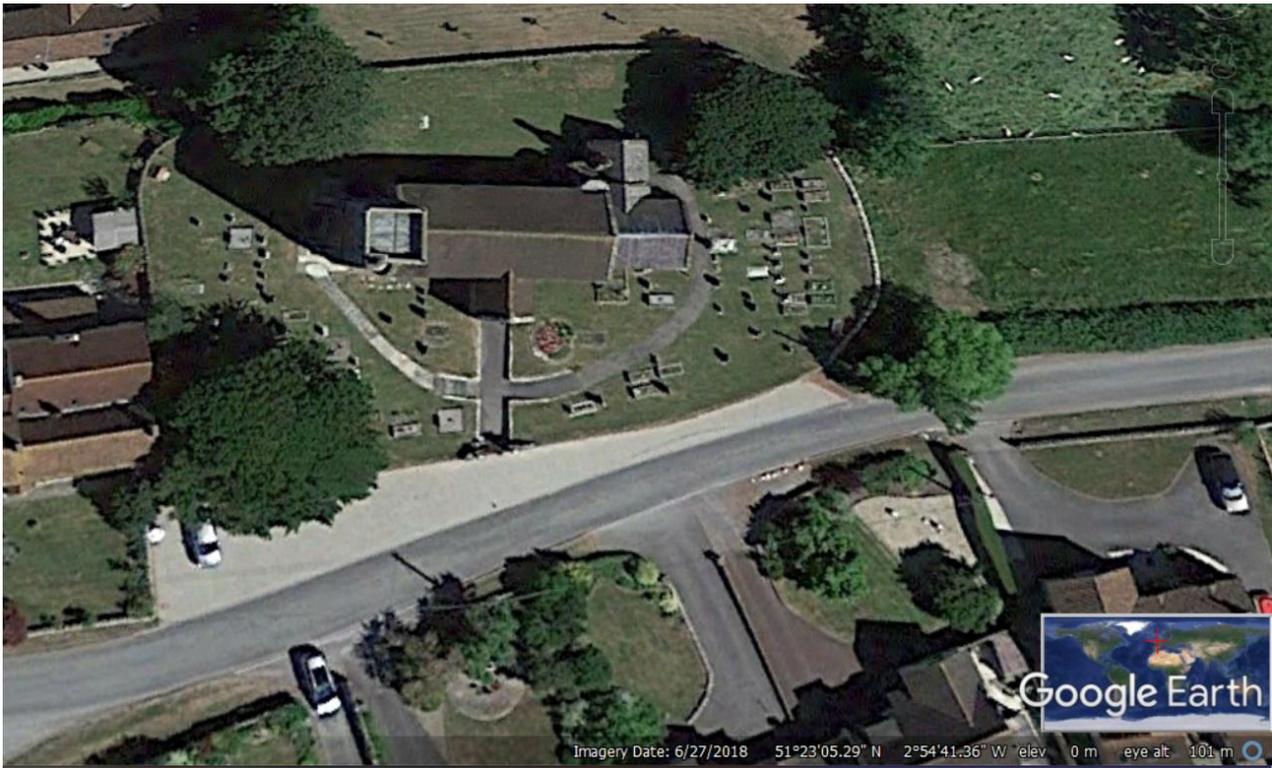
I would like to thank the following for their tremendous help:

David Long, John Wilcox and David Ardron for photographs.

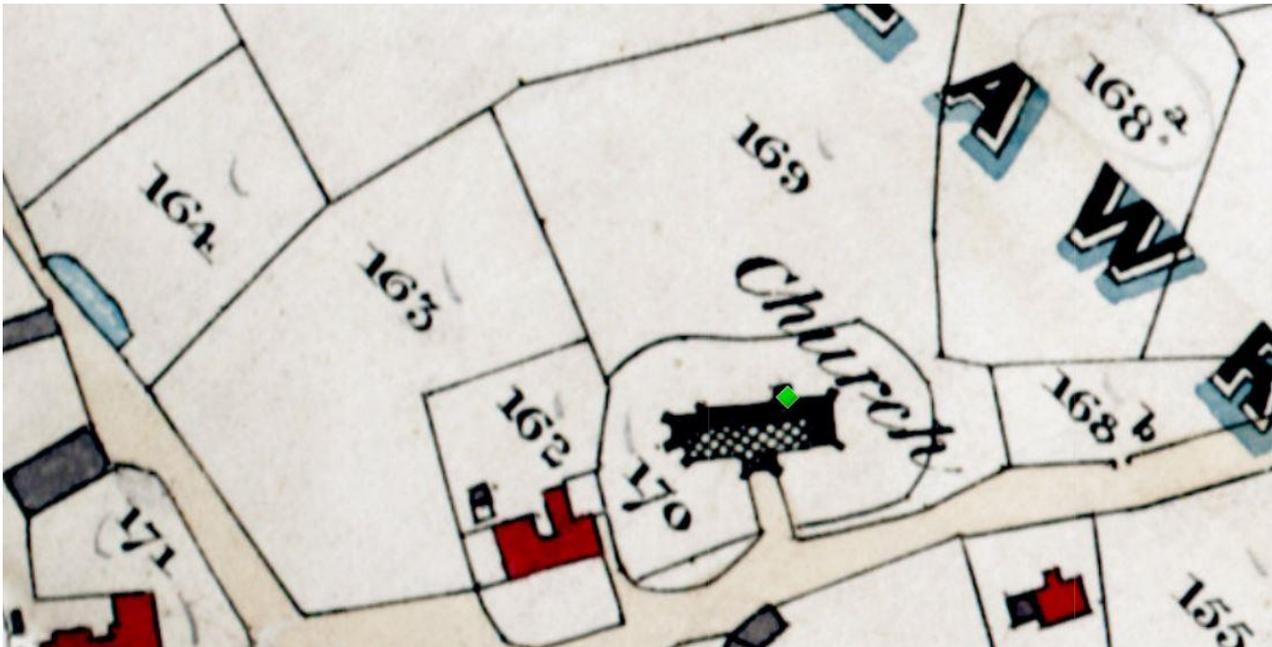
Vince Russett for inspiration and guidance.

Chris Short

September 2020



Wick St Lawrence land does not exceed 20 feet above sea level and the church is several feet above this. The church sits in a circular enclosure which may be an infield enclosure, suggesting a focus for an early settlement and perhaps an early medieval Christian site.



Tithe map c1839

Outside the Church



Pevesner records that the church dates from the Perpendicular period. This is the final period of English Gothic architecture (late 14th–middle 16th century). The church is Listed (Grade 2) as circa 15th century.

In 1791 the church was struck by lightning causing considerable damage which resulted in cracks in the tower walls, which had to be strengthened with iron bands, and other damage to the body of the church required repair. Over the next 60 years further cracks appeared in the tower walls and it was noted that the sea air had decayed the lias-stone walls, the chancel arch was unsafe, and roof timbers required repair or replacement.

The church was thoroughly restored and extended in 1864-65 by Foster and Wood of Bristol.

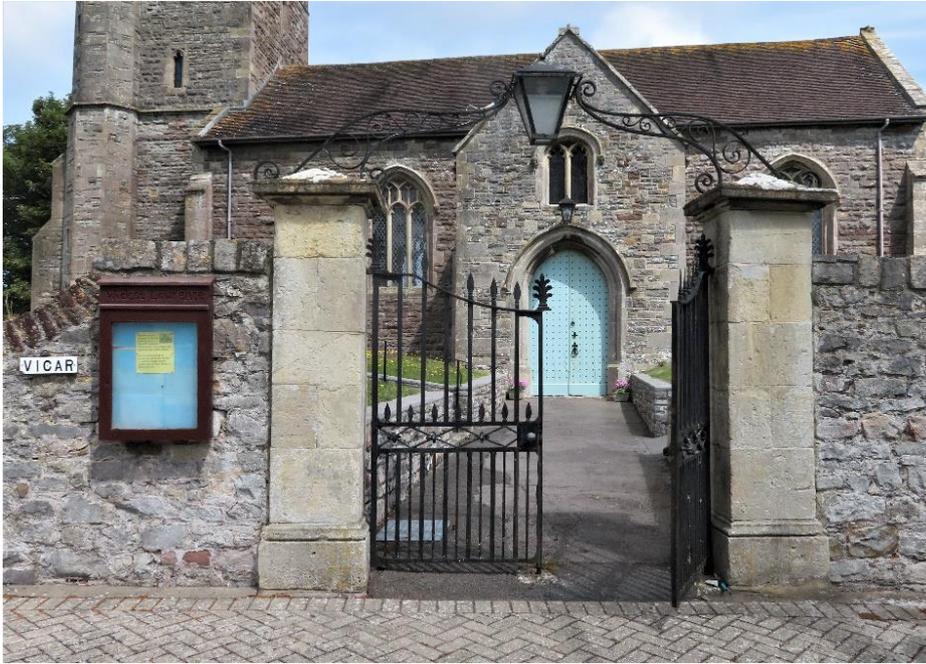
Nailsea pennant stone was used to rebuild the outer walls in particular the chancel, the rood-loft tower and western belfry wall.

The west window of the tower received new freestone tracery

The porch was rebuilt with blue Worle stone and a small quantity of honey coloured Ham-hill stone, reddish Weston stone and Bath stone.

Inside the church the chancel arch was rebuilt and walls restored

In addition, a vestry room and organ chamber were added on the north side of the chancel.



The Listed (Grade 11) late 18th century cast iron gates with curved head and central decorative frieze between square piers are surmounted by an ogee shaped wrought iron overthrow with lantern bracket.



The Tower



A three-stage tower with a south west polygonal stair turret.

The first stage has diagonal buttresses and a moulded west door with fleurons and head stops and restored west window

A second stage has single light windows

The third stage has 2-light windows. Above it is a plain parapet with tiny pinnacles (Small corner spires).



The weather cock is said to be about 280 years old.

The 'London Chronicle' of January 14, 1791 reported:

'Last week at Wick St. Lawrence in Somersetshire, a Thunderbolt struck the Weather Cock of the Tower, and very much damaged the Pinnacle, entered the West Window, and took its course into the body of the church, the Pulpit Cloth, and cracked the Pulpit, which was built of stone, and very much injured the whole of the Fabric. The damage is estimated at three hundred pounds.'

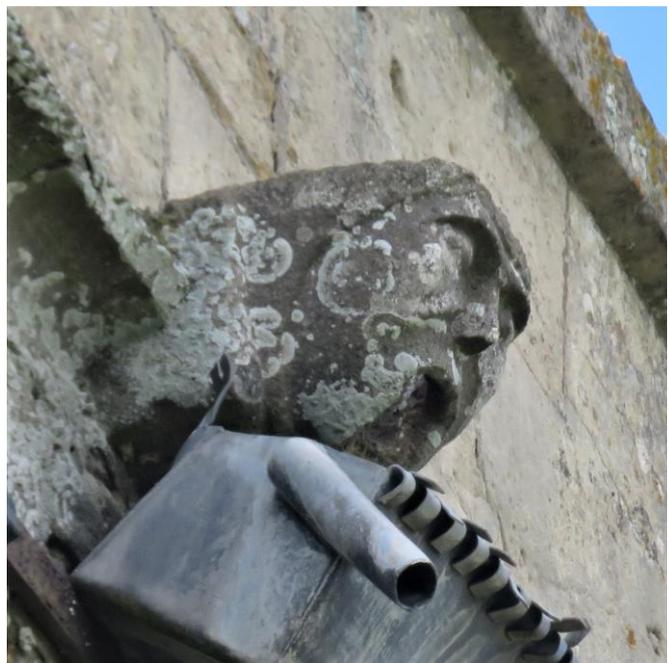


Tower – East and North



An interesting gargoyle on the north side of the tower.

A gargoyle is a carved or formed grotesque with a spout which conveyed water from a roof away from the side of a building. They prevented rainwater from running down walls



Tower – West



The moulded west door with fleurons and head stops and restored west window.



Two more gargoyles.



The Perpendicular restored west window and west door.



The very worn head terminals on the door arch.



The finely carved flowers on the archway.

Tower: South



A dragon like gargoyle.



The south west corner of the tower contains a tide or scratch dial.



The remains of the ancient scratch dial (or Mass dial) probably moved from elsewhere. The lines were used to indicate the hours of observance of the church services before the days of clocks. A gnomon or pointer was inserted in the central hole, now filled in, to cast a shadow. Readings can only be taken below the horizontal line, graduated from approximately 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. GMT.

This dial appears to be late medieval.

South



To the east of the porch are the remains of the church cross.

We are indeed fortunate in that Vince Russett, formerly North Somerset Archaeologist has been researching crosses for some 40 years. His excellent publication *Wick St Lawrence, Old stone crosses*, (See <http://www.ycccart.co.uk> Report 2018, Y5, v1), details both Wick St Lawrence crosses. In respect of the churchyard cross he records:

'Buckler's drawing of the churchyard cross in 1827 shows three steps of the cross surviving, and possibly not even on its current site (it seems to be further from the church porch than today). Pooley recorded "In the churchyard are the ruins of the octagonal base of another ancient Cross." Jenkins makes the suggestion: Soon after this date, in 1836, Henry Sheppard of Wick was allowed by the Churchwardens to have the stones lying in the churchyard for his trouble making the returns to the Court of Sewers. Stones had probably been lying about since lightning badly damaged the church in 1791, leaving a terrible mess until the mid-19th century renovations. Perhaps the remains of the cross were considered to be lying about and were carted off too. The current remains of the cross are very close to the church porch, and may lie on a slight mound, but this is emphasised by the deeply cut path from the gate to the porch door, and may not be archaeologically significant. The cross is an octagon of worked stones forming an octagonal flower bed today.

The stones seem very large for such an apparently small cross and have benching on them. The possibility must be entertained that this is simply a flowerbed made up with worked stones, potentially from the churchyard cross, although the apparent mound they stand on adds some credence to this being the site of the cross. The Historic England Scheduling document refers to "Probing around the base of the calvary suggests there is stone c 0.1m beneath the surface to a width of 0.5m from the base of the calvary indicating the presence of another calvary step or substructure below ground", which is also encouraging and tending to view this as the original site.'



Buckler's 1827 drawing.



South east of the church with the blocked priest's door.





The Priest's Door.

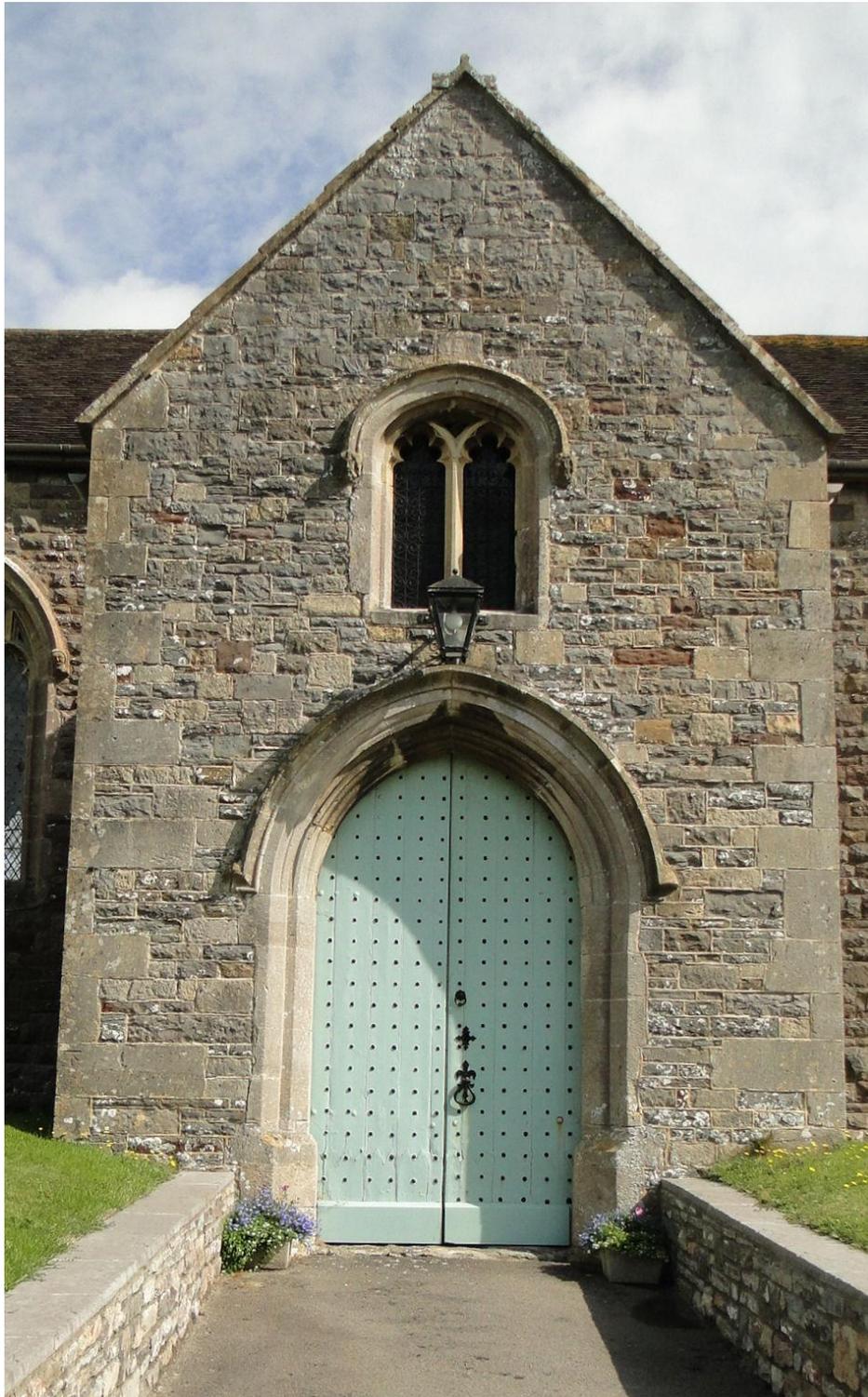
This small door was used by priests to enter and leave the chancel at the time when the priesthood and laity separated themselves. The villagers occupied the nave.



The Perpendicular window to the right of the south porch has some interesting head terminals.



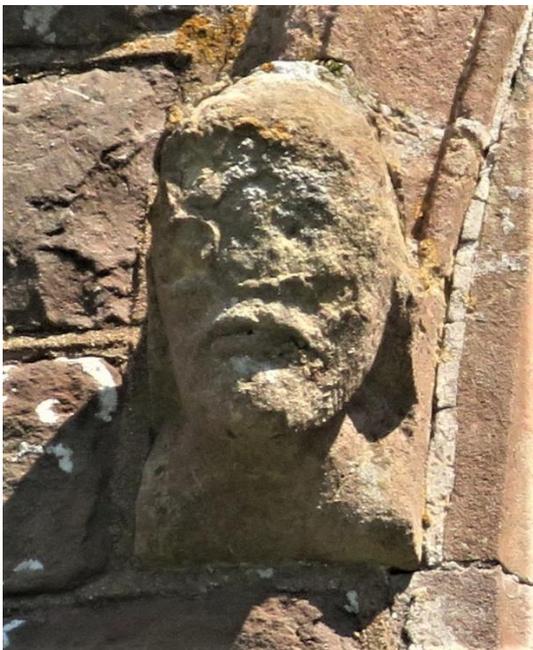
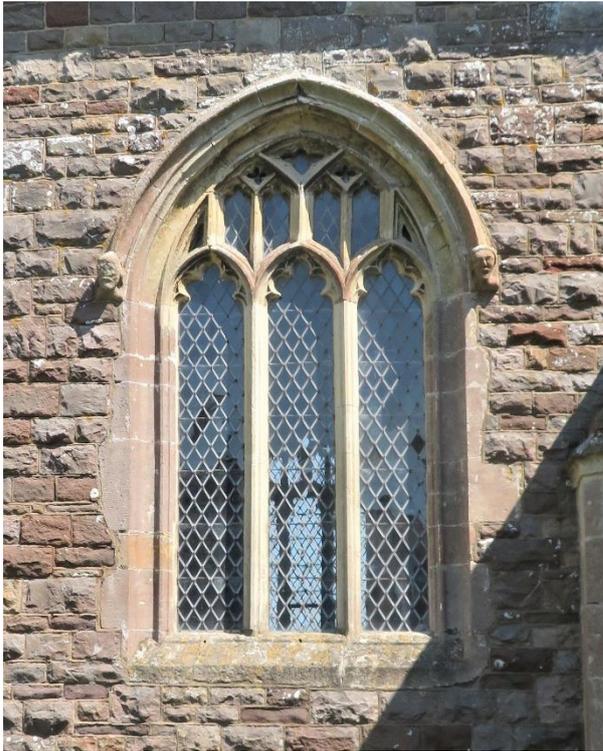
The Porch



The porch was rebuilt in 1865.



Head terminals on the window arch are worn and possibly from the earlier build.



The Perpendicular window to the left of the porch with head terminals. Above right is the tower which contained a staircase leading to an upper room or gallery.

North Side



The top east wall contains this timber.

Why is it there?

East of the Tower



Worn head terminals suggest some age.

North Door



The blocked up north doorway can be seen to the right of the grey drainpipe. A north doorway was common in medieval churches. It is said that traditionally they were called the Devil's door and during baptism they were left open to let out any evil spirits in the child. However, this was not part of the official liturgy and seems to have no substance.

The north door was used on Palm Sunday. The entire parish re-enacted the triumphal entry of Christ into Jerusalem and left the church by the north door. After proceeding in a clockwise direction round the east end of the church the procession entered the south door. Many north doors were blocked up during sixteenth century, most likely as processions were by then banned and the door was not required.

Perhaps though such doors were blocked up to stop the draughts from the cold north wind.

North Middle Window





Better preserved head terminals.



Interesting early head terminals. The one on the right has a style of headdress worn in the 13th century.



A vestry room and organ chamber were erected on the north east side of the church in the 19th century.

It is recorded that:
 'On 2nd September 1864, the Reverend W. Hunt, MA Incumbent of Trinity Church, Weston-super-Mare, laid the foundation stone for this on the north side of the chancel. Underneath this stone a small glass box, containing six silver and three bronze coins of that reign, each of a different value, and a glass bottle, was laid. It also contained the following inscription on parchment - "Wick St. Lawrence Parish Church -Joseph Haythorne, MA rector; Aubrey Townsend, BD curate; Samuel Thomas Jey, George Parsons, churchwardens. The parishioners, the Rector, the Curate, the Bishop, the Archdeacon, the Rural Dean, have severally contributed to the erection of this building in dependence on the blessing of Almighty God. Messrs Foster and Wood of Bristol, architects, Mr C. H. Poole of Weston-super-Mare, contractor."`



The north east extensions and rebuilt roof loft staircase tower.



The east façade.



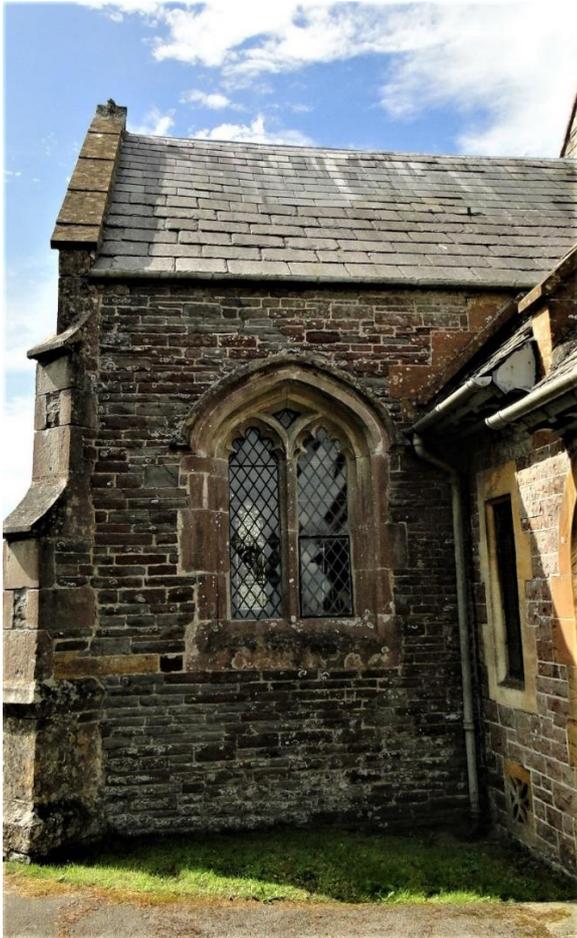
Above: The east window.



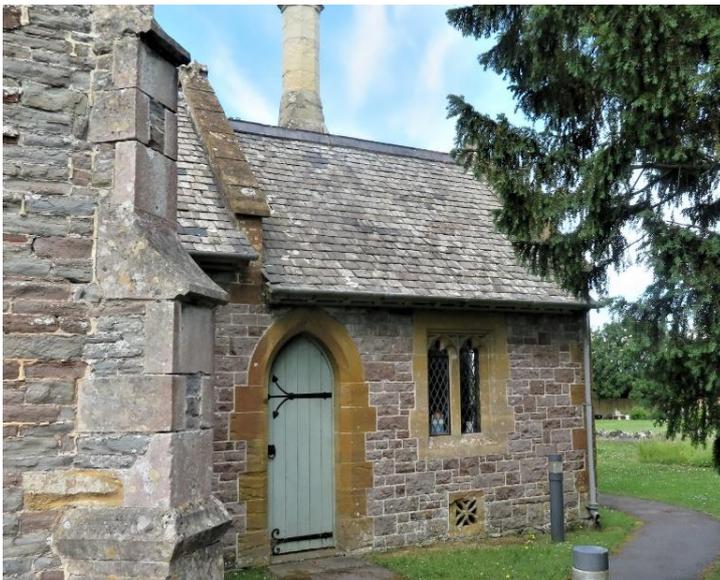
Left: During the 19th century a coal boiler was added for underground heating. This required this large chimney.



The rebuilt rood tower has this fine gargoyle.



The east end on the north of the church.





The east wall of the nave contains a stone with a V.

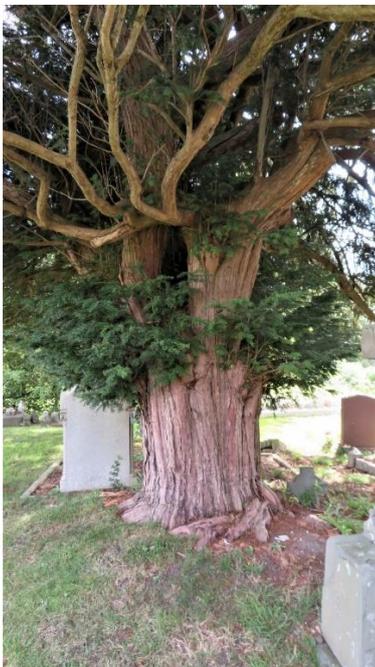


The Perpendicular style east window. This contains, on the right-hand side, the initials E N (Indicated by the arrow). Who was this?

Yew Trees



The smaller yew on the north east corner of the church is said to have been planted on the 4th March 1842 to obliterate the site of a cock fighting pit. In 1835 this blood sport was banned in England. It is said that if cock fighting was undertaken in the hallowed ground of a churchyard, spells and charms would be annulled and the best bird would win.

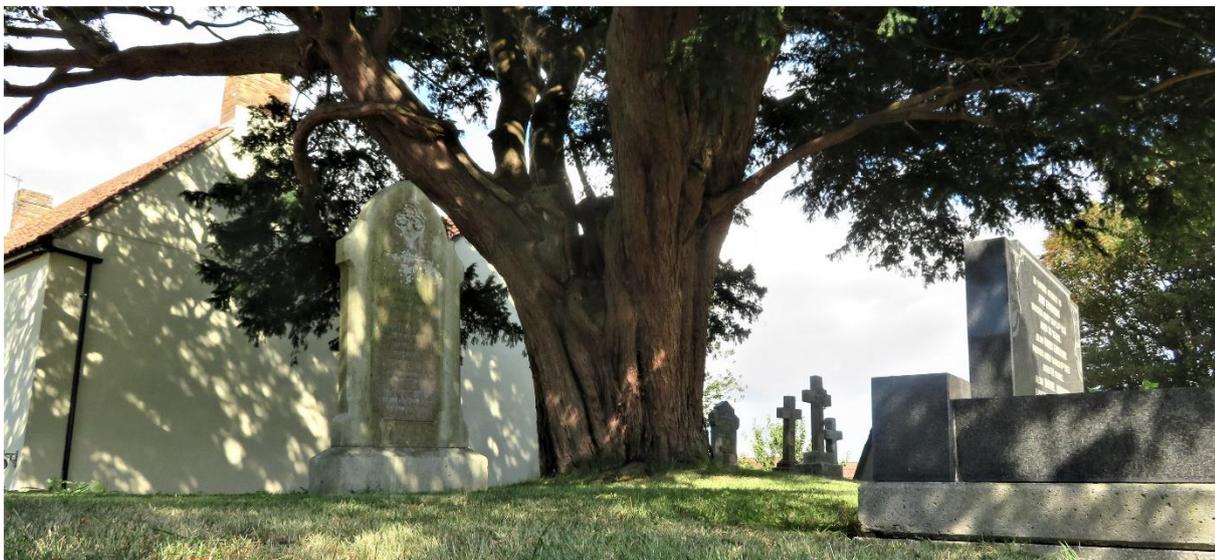


In July 2020 the girth was measured at 3 metres. Using online charts the age for this measurement is in the range 290 or 420 years old but there are records showing a date of only 178 years old.



The large male yew tree in the south west corner of the churchyard was recorded in 2003 as having a girth of 4.5 metres (15 feet). Using online charts which give an idea of age this equates to 630 to 650 years old.

In July 2020 a measurement of 5 metres was recorded. Using online charts, which give an idea of age, this equates to 700 to 800 years old. From the comments made regarding the smaller yew perhaps a lesser age is indicated which would take it back to nearer when the current church was built (Circa 15th century).



Some Tombstones

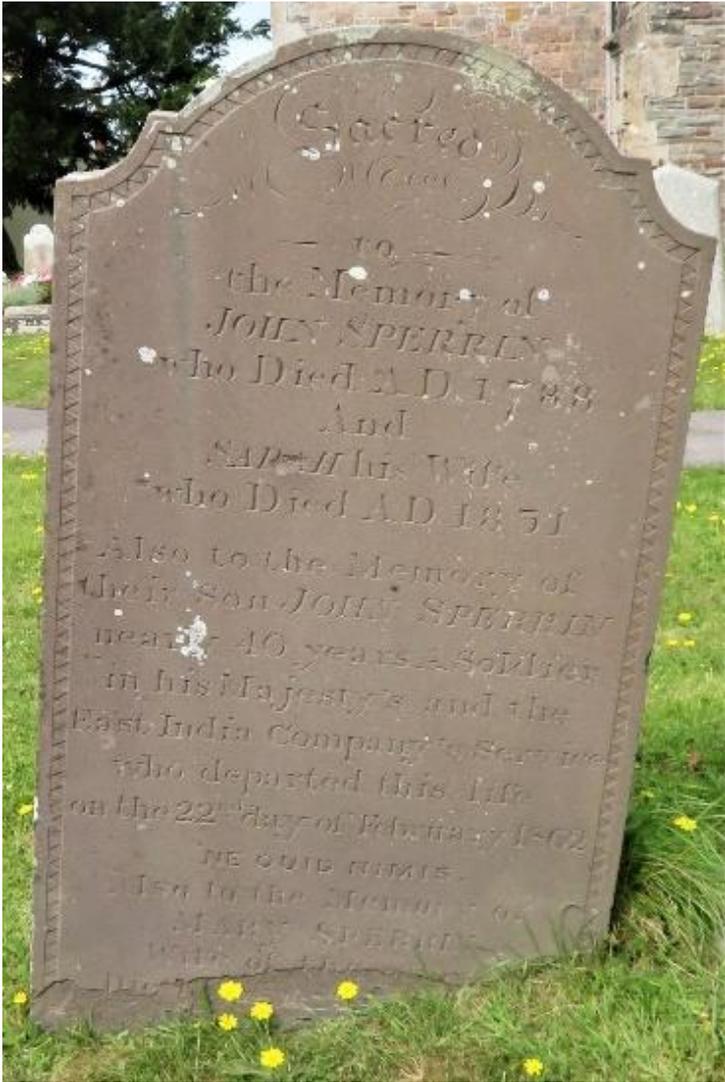


202804 PRIVATE
E.J. BADMAN
WILTSHIRE REGIMENT
21ST MARCH 1917 AGE 19

THY WILL BE DONE

The tombstone lies close and to the east of the large yew

Ernest died at Sutton Veny Military Hospital. He was the son of William and Fanny Badman, of Banksea, Wick St. Lawrence.



This early tombstone is on the east of the church

Sacred
to
the Memory of
JOHN SPERRIN
Who died A D 1788
And
Sarah his wife
Who died A D 1851
Also to the Memory
Of their son JOHN SPERRIN
Nearly 40 years a Soldier
In his Majesty's and the
East India Company's Service
who departed this life
On the 22nd day of February 1862
NE QUID NIMIS
Also to the Memory of
MARY SPERRIN
Wife of the above
Died

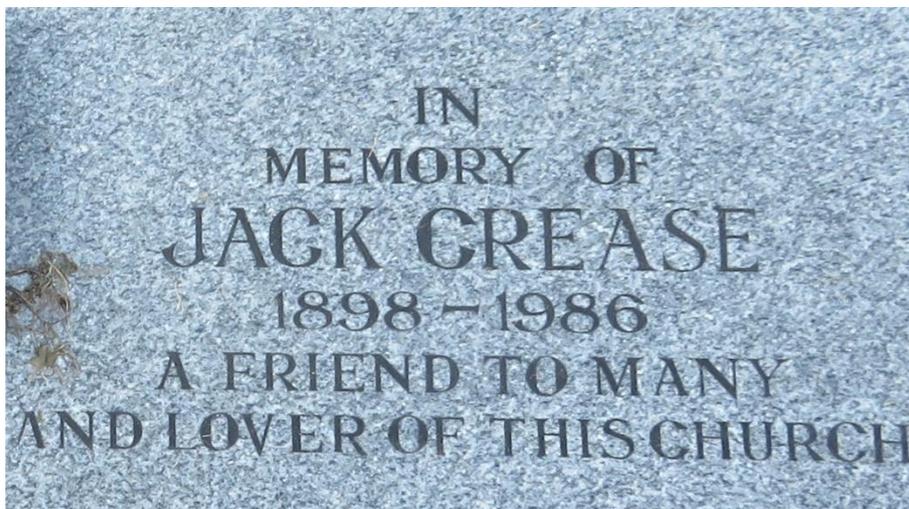
John Sperring's will records. 'Bengal Establishment Assistant Commissary of Ordnance but now Her Majesty's Indian Service deceased who died 22 February 1862 at Park-villas.'

5 Park- villas, Weston super Mare was his last home.

The north side of the church



North of the church are just two memorials placed there by request. This side of the church is often damp and dark and usually was the place for suicides, stillborn, unbaptised and illegitimate babies to be buried.



The stained-glass east window, dedicated in 1989, is a memorial to Arthur John Pickett (Jack) Crease of Yatton a much-loved patron of the church. Jack worked enthusiastically with the Sunday School, as a lay preacher and with the choir.

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