

Welcome
to
St Merthiana Church



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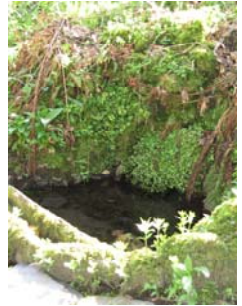
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When you have finished using this guide could you please return it to the area by the door so it is ready for use by another visitor.

If you would like a copy of the guide it can be downloaded from our web site at **www.theseasideparish.org**. If you wish to take this copy with you then please donate £1.00 to cover the cost of printing. All donations should be placed in the churn by the door. **Thank you.**

A brief history

This area of the parish now known as Minster has in the past been called Tolcane or Talkarn which translates as 'rock chapel or cell'. This name refers to the legend of the foundation of the church which has it that a Welsh princess Madryn fled from her home to this valley in around 500AD and set up a ministry of healing by prayer and water from what is now known as the holy well. This well can still be found in the lower churchyard on the north side of the church. It is thought that this site has been in continuous Christian use since this date which makes it one of the first and oldest Christian sites in the country. The earliest church building (as we understand it today) is thought to date back to 1150. This building became a Monastery Church with the priory leading off from what is now one of the windows in the north wall of the chancel.



If looked at carefully (and with some imagination!) the outline of this old doorway can still be seen when viewed from outside. The priory was eventually closed in 1402 by Henry IV and the building turned into a rectory ready for the first rector who was appointed in 1407. The parish of Minster was joined with the parish of Forrabury (Boscastle) in 1779 to form the single parish of Forrabury and Minster which is what we know today.

Over the course of its 1500 year history there have been many changes to the site. The church building itself has undergone at least two major restoration projects. The first in 1507 added what is now the south aisle with a small chapel, rebuilt the porch and also the upper part of the tower which is thought to have been partly destroyed by a lightning strike. It might have been at this time that the design of shears or scissors was engraved on one of the tower corner stones. It was in the second half of the 1800's, after the collapse of the roof that the second project took place. During this the roof was repaired with the removal of the old barrel vault roof (which also had carved images) and



the interior medieval fabric was 'restored' with the destruction of box pews with beautifully carved bench ends, a singers gallery, a three-decker pulpit, and the chapel in the south aisle.

Since this last restoration there has been little change to the church until the flood of 2004 when the church was filled with 5 to 6 feet of water and silt. During the following year the building was dried out and restored to it's pre flood condition. This work was made possible with the help of the Ecclesiastical Insurance Group and also by the very generous donations of individuals concerned about the damage to this beautiful and historic building. The new kneelers which are displayed in the church were all worked by local people and friends of the church. The cross



which can be seen on the altar together with a pair of candlesticks, were hand made in Tasmania out of Tasmanian Huon Pine and Blackwood by Charles and Jo Payne whose relatives

were born in Boscastle in 1886.



Although at times the churchyard may look untidy and uncared for, it is in fact managed very carefully with advice from, and in consultation with, Natural England. The reason for this is that the churchyard has been designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest, with its diverse flora and fauna and especially for its colonies of hibernating and breeding bats.

The Church

This has been a Christian site for 1500 years, the position of the church building within the site and its interior layout have changed over the centuries. Folklore has it that the body of the original hermit (Madryn) is buried under the chancel area and one recent incumbent reportedly felt this had been confirmed by dowsing!!! The interior we see today is almost entirely the result of the 1800's restoration.



The Font — This is normally found just inside the door of a church as baptism, for which the font is used, signifies the start of a life following the teachings of Christ. Every font will have a hole in its base so as to allow water that has been consecrated for the act of baptism to be let out to the earth after the service. This font is one of the few items to have survived the 1800's and dates back to Norman times.

The Pulpit— It is from here that the sermon reflecting upon how God is still active in our lives today is preached by the priest, deacon, reader or other persons given permission to preach by either bishop or priest-in-charge. This pulpit is thought to be on the site of the old 'triple' pulpit which was removed in the 1800's. A triple pulpit has three tiers the first or lowest tier was where the parish clerk sat who had the responsibility to lead the singing and to read from the bible. The middle or second tier was for the priest and formed his reading desk, while the top or third tier was for preaching the sermon.



As you move from the nave of the church (the part where the pews are) into the chancel (the part where the clergy and choir sit) you pass under the rood. This is in the position where in medieval times there would have been a rood screen. The screen was there to separate the clergy from the congregation. The services at that time would have been said in Latin and the majority of people would not understand what was being said and so were left to their own devices (to talk etc). When an important part of the service was reached a bell would be rung to attract the congregation's attention. This could be the reason why the pulpit is always found outside the chancel as this is where the word of God is proclaimed to the people, so it needed to be in the nave where the people would be.



The Altar— near the east wall of the chancel is the altar table. Although in many country churches the altar is often very old this particular example is probably only just over 100 years old. The altar forms a focal point in many church services as it is on the altar that the elements used in the communion service are consecrated. It is also common to keep God's word, in the form of the gospels or a bible, on the altar during services.



Immediately to the right of the altar (as you face it) there is a small table called a **Credence Table** and it is on this that items such as bread, wine and water are placed before being used in a communion service. This table is one of the few original items of the church's furniture and by looking at the carving on it you are given some idea of what the woodwork in the church must have looked like between the 16th and 19th centuries.



Coming out of the chancel back into the nave of the church on the left hand side is the **Lectern**. This is a relatively simple example of a lectern as they are often carved in the shape of a soaring eagle. The eagle is the symbol of St John the Evangelist whose words in the Book of Revelation "soared up into the presence of Christ". In mediaeval times it was believed that the eagle renewed itself by flying into the sun. It is on the lectern that the bible is kept from which readings are now read during services.



At the other end of the church (the west end) if you look over the screen into the tower you can see a wooden ladder attached to the wall which is used to give access into the bell chamber with its single bell. This ladder is called a **Jacob's Ladder** and is made out of a single plank of wood with hand and foot holes cut out into it. Unlike a modern ladder a Jacob's ladder is not easy to move around as it is very heavy and is therefore normally fixed in a single position.



On the walls of the church there are a number of interesting items and memorials.

In the chancel area there is a memorial to John Cotton who was Lord of the Manor of Boscastle which dates back to 1675. This memorial is also of interest as the remains of the original paint work can still be seen on parts of the stone work. At the back of the



church to the left of the door as you came in are a number of tablets and grave stones relating to the same family. Since medieval times the Lord of the Manor and his family owned the land, farms, cottages of Boscastle together with the



harbour rights. This continued until 1946 when the village of Boscastle was put up for sale. On the left



of the tower is a bequest board which also dates to around the 1600's although the bequest of six pounds per year to the poor of the parish no longer exists. This board had just been restored in the spring of 2004 and was replaced on the wall in a slightly higher position. When the church was flooded in the summer of that year, the flood water came to within an inch of the bottom of the board.

Into the future—the care, maintenance and restoration of this building is an ongoing project. With two listed buildings within the one parish the demands for resources both financial and physical are considerable. Since 2005, when the restoration from the flood was completed, we have acted on improving the safety of visitors with the provision of handrails and maintenance of pathways and steps. The humidity of the building is now controlled with the dehumidifiers and access to the holy well has been opened up. More work needs to be done in the churchyard in consultation with Natural England and, in our dreams, we would like to do something about heating the church so that it could be used all year round.

Something to do!!!

Can you answer the following clues, fill in the grid and find the hidden word. Also you might be able to find all the answers in the word search which is also on the inserted sheet. You are welcome to keep the grid and word search but could you please return the guide booklet to the back of the church as we only have limited numbers of these.

Clues:

1. What is used to get to the bell chamber?
2. How many tiers were there in the old pulpit?
3. The font dates from which?
4. Where is bread and wine placed before the communion service?
5. Who arrived in about 500AD?
6. What did Merthiana use for healing?
7. What wood is the altar cross made of?
8. What is engraved on the tower?
9. What is the translation of the celtic word Talkarn?
10. Who died in 1567?
11. Where was the altar cross made?

Now look down the grid in the highlighted box and you should find the twelfth word in the word search.

And finally ...

We hope you have enjoyed your visit to this church and thank you for visiting us—we are only sorry that we could not be present to greet you personally.

If you would like to find out more about the parish, our services and other events which take place during the year, the Friends of Forrabury and Minster Church have a web site at **www.theseasideparish.org** (More information about the Friends can be found on this site).

If you would like to give a donation towards the upkeep and running of this church and parish there is a churn for donations by the door.

Did you know that you can tell the government how you would like them to spend your tax money on this donation by putting your donation in one of the envelopes and completing the details on the front?

We will **ONLY** use this information to claim back your tax and **WILL NOT** use it to send you junk mail or for any other purpose.

A prayer

Heavenly Father,
we thank you for our holidays
and for all times of rest and recreation.
Give refreshment to body and spirit
to all those who are on holiday
and to all those who visit this place.
We ask that they might return home safely
refreshed and with a new strength
and vision of your love;
Through Jesus Christ our Lord Amen