

## Church Interior

### **Carved Stones**

At present stored in the porch are two carved stones. These could be either grave markers or the elaborately carved ends of a chest tomb. They are notable for the weeping figures.



### **Door Surround**

Originally there was no porch and the pediment above was easily visible. Here can be seen a mass of carving in which are heads of lions and other images unusual around a church door. The inside of the door has a carved plaster surround which would have matched the heavily ornamented ceiling lost in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The central motif is of a cockleshell. These not only represent St James but are also associated with pilgrims to Santiago de Compostella.

### **Vicars**

Displayed on the wall is a list of those known to have been incumbents here. For some we know a little more than just their name.

John Bertie was a member of the Bertie family of Rycote and a student of Christ Church, Oxford, where he lived. In 1738 he is recorded as serving the church himself, holding two services on Sundays at which about 50 people took the sacrament.

James Hakewell, although vicar for over 50 years from 1746 to 1798, employed curates at Weston while he himself held two other Oxfordshire parishes, 'by which means' his income was 'more comfortable' to him.

Hon Frederick Bertie was another member of the Bertie family to serve the church, in his case as curate around 1816.

Andrew Hughes Matthews, vicar from 1822 to 1853, followed the interests of many Victorians and devoted his spare time to the breeding of a very ornamental form of carnation, called a picotee. He was honoured when one variety was named after him.



George Lowther Davey was the vicar from 1920 to 1932 and is remembered as being a caring man who kept three goats in the churchyard. After evening service he would invite the congregation to the vicarage garden to watch or play tennis. He took his Great Dane dog when he visited the school, causing merriment when the dog lifted up the desks.

Howard Samuel Johns was a member of a well-known acting family. His wife was a member of the Staffordshire china manufacturing family famous for Mason's Ironstone – of which there were many examples on display in the vicarage. Rev Johns also taught at Magdalen College School whilst living here. During the war the family, like many others in the village, took in an evacuee.

### **Window in Tower**



This glass panel, believed to be an old piece re-used with an added dedication, was installed by R.D Dry, in memory of his mother. The Revd W Dry, vicar of Weston until his death in 1877 was the son of Richard Dry.

### **Sculpture**

Displayed here are two carved stone heads. They appear to have been the carved supports for small plinths which perhaps supported a statue. It is not known if they relate to this or a previous building or if



they were donated at some time in the past.

### **Bells**

Although the three bells in place in the 19<sup>th</sup> century are known to date from the 15<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries the earliest written record of the bells is in 1775 when the churchwardens paid for bell ropes, oil for the bells and repairs to the bell frame. Bells were not only rung for church



services, they were used at the behest of state and church officials to mark important events such as victories against the French and the safe delivery of members of the royal family from illness or childbirth. Every year the survival of the government from the Popish Gunpowder plot on 5<sup>th</sup> November 1605 was also celebrated. Bells marked the death of parishioners. In 1834 the vicar paid for the casting of a small bell to be used as a sanctus bell and also for the repair of the bell

wheels.

These three bells were recast in 1870 and two new bells were added in the restoration of 1884/5. When the church tower was repaired in 1913 the bells were re-hung on a metal frame. The five bells served the parish until 2013 when a sixth bell, dedicated to the memory of a parishioner, was added to the ring.

### Coat of Arms

There is a coloured plaster plaque above the archway. Dating from the 18<sup>th</sup> century such plaques denoted allegiance to the monarch.

### Painted Inscription

Uncovered during the last refurbishment of the church the full text is:- *Therefore with joy shall we draw water out of the wells of salvation.* This Victorian addition probably dates from the opening of the base of the tower in the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and is a quote from Isaiah 12.

### Font

The 12<sup>th</sup> century font is circular with interlacing arcading and is on a moulded octagonal base of a later date. It is large enough to allow total immersion of the infant as was common at one time. The font symbolises a welcome into the church and marks the start of the journey through life and so is positioned close to the doorway and at the beginning of the aisle and the journey to the altar .

### The Organ

Prior to the installation of the present organ the churchwardens record the use and failure of a harmonium during the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The present organ was bought in 1885, having been built by C Martin of Oxford at a cost of £189. At the time, newspaper reports said that *competent musicians thought it had a very sweet tone.* It was originally placed to the left of the altar and was powered by hand-operated bellows. In 1923 it was moved to the present position near the font. In 1979 it was fully renovated by NW Hoskin of Plymouth at a cost of about £3,000. The year 2015 will mark 130 years of organ music in church, prior to which music would have been provided by parishioners and whatever musical instruments they could play or the harmonium mentioned.

### War Memorial

The brass plate and the two War Memorials are covered on separate sheets.

### Paintings

Norreys Bertie had been on The Grand Tour of Europe and had seen many buildings and works of art. When he returned and planned the rebuilding of Weston church he not only drew on his experiences for the design of the building but also commissioned the painting behind the altar. Attributed to Pompeo Batoni (1708-1787) this large 18<sup>th</sup> century canvas has a central diptych of the Ten Commandments which may not be original and is surrounded by cherubs and symbols of the crucifixion.

The painting 'The Assumption of the Virgin' is a copy of a painting by Murillo which was gifted to the church early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The original was painted in 1678.

### Memorials within the Church

Although the original church is known to have contained brasses and memorials to parishioners, the 1743 building contains only memorials to members of the Norreys Bertie family – some of which were presumably in the previous building. Of note are the following:-

(Sir) Franciscus Norreys died in 1669. He had been a supporter of Charles I during the Civil War.

Elizabeth Bertie, wife of James Bertie, died in 1720. She died in childbirth and is buried with Philadelphia, her daughter *who survived her not many days*.

Mary Norreys, relict of James Norreys died in 1748, age 72. She gave the silver chalice and patten still used on special occasions.

Norreys Bertie was responsible for the rebuilding of the church and died in 1766. He had died in Ghent and his body returned to Weston for burial.

Peregrine Bertie was born while his parents were in exile – hence his name which means wanderer. The third son of Richard Bertie and his wife Catherine, who was a kinswoman of Catherine of Aragon, Peregrine joined the navy and became the captain of the ship Shannon which saw action off the coast of Canada and Portugal. He served as a member of parliament for Oxford and he died in 1790.

### The Crosses

The Armada Cross is reputed to have come from the masthead of a ship of the Spanish Armada. It is thought to be possibly medieval/13<sup>th</sup> century and was given to the church by Lady Greville of Weston Manor in 1928.

The Processional Cross was made by Mr Dorling, blacksmith, at the request of Ronald Greville and is inset with a small Russian brass of the Virgin given by the vicar Rev Davey.

The Altar Cross is thought to have come from Lisbon. The date of this cross is not known. There is a record of resetting a jewel in the cross at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.



### Candlesticks

In 1923, at a time of refurbishment, Capt and Mrs Margesson, then living at the Manor, gave (amongst other things) two old English wrought-iron standard candlesticks. These are still in use today.

### Altar Rails

These were installed after the First World War in thanks for the safe return of soldiers from the parish. There is a carved inscription underneath, naming the craftsman responsible as Stubbings.

### The Bier

After the First World War it was decided that the parish required a bier. Prior to this, family and friends would carry the coffin from home to church on their shoulders, or a bier would be hired. This required someone to bicycle to Middleton Stoney or Chesterton, return to Weston pulling the bier which could then carry the coffin. After the funeral this journey would be reversed. In all this was charged at five shillings. A collection was organised and the local wheelwright commissioned to build a bier for Weston parish. This, along with a shed in which to store it was charged at £24 and by the end of the 1930s was in regular use. The wheelwright at this time was also the carpenter who made the coffin and the sexton who dug the required grave.



### Brass Plate

On the wall near the bier is a brass plate. This is possibly a coffin plate unearthed when a subsequent burial was attempted. The plate commemorates Montague, Earl of Abingdon and Baron Norrey of Rycot who died in 1743.

## Embroideries Projects

By the early 1970s it was obvious that the kneelers used regularly in the Church were getting beyond repair and would need replacing. Beginning with those on the altar rails a few new kneelers were worked each year. Many people were involved and after nearly 30 years the project was completed. Some are in memory of loved ones, others celebrate special occasions at local and national level. Some depict notable buildings in the village, whilst others commemorate societies or groups within Weston.



In 1995 a new altar frontal was planned, as a memorial to a much loved churchwarden and member of the family of the village wheelwright. The design incorporates her favourite flowers and those linked to St Mary. One of the group completed the project by working the pulpit fall depicting wild flowers and the Armada Cross.

## Stained Glass

Apart from the window in the vestry there are seven other areas of stained glass. The window nearest to the organ was installed to mark the Millennium. In recognition of the fact that the church was once dedicated to St James the Apostle the design of a cockleshell was chosen. The cockleshell appears elsewhere in the church and its association with pilgrimage was thought appropriate for the beginning of a new millennium. The remaining roundels date from the 1870s when the gothic tracery was added. They together represent God as the Alpha and Omega – the beginning and end of all things; the dove of the Holy Spirit which descended to Jesus at his baptism; Jesus in the words of John the Baptist as the “*Lamb of God*”; the intertwined letters IHS from the Greek spelling of Jesus; finally the six-pointed star comprising two interlacing triangles represents the eternal nature of the Trinity and is also an ancient symbol of creation.

## Pews

There are several references to the seating in the church dating from the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century. The last reference is in 1884/5 when it is recorded that seating was replaced. The pews were acquired second-hand and installed. The numbers on each refer to their original use. Some ‘carving’, doubtless by bored boys, along with that on the doorway, testifies to the enduring need to make a mark.

## Panelling

The local paper reported that ‘*Weston church has been panelled with a dado of oak*’. This was completed in 1928 and had been paid for by Lord Greville and carved by Mr Boddington. At the same time a canopy was erected over the altar. This was of dark red brocade and along with heavy curtains to each side of the altar and over the first pair of windows gave a dim aspect to the church. The canopy was finally removed some 70-80 years later.

