

St John the Baptist

Byford

Church Lane
Hereford
HR4 7LD

Since very early times there has been a settlement at Byford with its crossings by ford and ferry across the Wye. The Romans had a marching camp here and the Roman road and Offa's Dyke help to form the northern and eastern boundaries of the parish. During the Civil War Parliamentary forces besieged and plundered the house at Garnons and in 1645 a Royalist army camped in the meadows below the church. In these more peaceful times we welcome walkers following the Wye Valley Walk which passes along the road by the church .

The church is built of local sandstone and began in the 12th century as a small rectangular building to which a south aisle was soon added. During the next two centuries the nave and aisle were extended, a Lady chapel was added and the chancel was rebuilt with a small steeple abutting it. In 1701 the steeple began to collapse and in 1715 it was pulled down and a new tower built at the west end of the nave to complete the form of the church we know today.



Church of St John the Baptist



Chancel

This collapse may mirror a similar event at the end of the 14th century when some sort of disaster damaged the Lady chapel so seriously that in 1400 Pope Boniface issued a mandate granting indulgences to anyone who contributed to its repair and rebuilding.

The offer was clearly successful as the funds it raised resulted in the creation of the present Lady chapel with its wall paintings which are our greatest treasure. The painting on the south wall shows St Margaret of Antioch holding a book and carrying a cross over her shoulder.

On the east wall the Virgin Mary appears as the Mater Misericordiae, sheltering human souls under her cloak

while on her left stands St Michael weighing souls as a devil tries to tip the balance.

The chapel was used for low mass and the squint which still remains in its west wall allowed watchers outside to see the altar during the service.

Among the many fine monuments in the church are a number of memorials to the Cotterell family of Garnons which were moved to Byford following the closure of the church at Mansell Gamage. They include that of Henry Geers Cotterell and his wife Katherine, daughter of Sir Richard Airey, the Crimean War General who was ordered by Lord Raglan to issue the order for the Light Brigade's fatal charge at Balaclava.

Herefordshire Family History Society have recorded inscriptions from all the monuments in the church and churchyard and a copy is kept in the church for visitors to use.



St Margaret



Cotterell Monument

cousins, William killed at Redan Ridge in November 1916 and Thomas who returned from his new home in Queensland, Australia only to die at Passchendaele a year later.

Our two war memorials also came from Mansell Gamage. They commemorate the twelve young men from the Garnons estate who died during WW1 including two Wootton



Davies Monument



We hold services on the fourth Sunday of the month, usually an evening service varying in style from traditional BCP Evensong through to more informal services of prayer and praise.

We welcome families and are child and animal friendly; we hold an

annual Pet Blessing Service each autumn and a local donkey regularly takes part in our Carol Service

Our festival services are usually followed by refreshments – a time to relax and share time together.



Harvest Service

Festive Donkey



After Service Fun