



The Church of St. Peter and Paul, Great Somerford

The origin of this church is not known. The first written record so far discovered is in a papal list of 1290, but the village itself which may well have had some place of worship is named in the Domesday Book in 1085. Earlier still Saint Aldhelm who lived in Malmesbury during the last half of the seventh century was known to like fords for his preaching places, so it is not unreasonable to hope that the existence of a Church in Somerford may date back to him.

Some traces of an older building were found below the tower when a boiler house was made in 1975. The first church was successively enlarged by the north aisle, chancel and tower, until finally the south wall was moved outwards to widen the nave. By the end of the fifteenth century the stone fabric – except for an organ chamber built in 1880 stood largely as it is now.

In contrast to this, most of the inside fittings are little more than a hundred years old. The pews were put in to replace the old “horse box” type, and a gallery in the north aisle taken down in 1865. Of the old woodwork only the sounding board above the pulpit remains. Since then have come the organ, choir stalls, vestry screen and all the windows except one in the children’s corner and a little piece of old glass high up in the south east of the nave.

The chancel ceiling was painted in 1901 in memory of the Rev. W. Andrews: the altar rail commemorates Canon F. H. Manley and the children’s corner was arranged as a memorial to Sarah Greenway, a Sunday School teacher who was over 66 years at the village school.

The processional cross given in memory of Alderman Edward J. Couzens, a faithful servant of the church, was carved by a local craftsman, Jack Evans of Seagry in 1970.

Stones inside and outside the building record many of the people who have worked and worshipped in this place and their labours are now being continued by the present inhabitants of the parish.

Transcribed from a board in Sts. Peter & Paul Church