

Church of the Holy Saviour, Puxton

A delightful Churches Conservation Trust church, Puxton is set on the Somerset Levels, a watery area criss-crossed with drainage ditches called reens (though spelt rhine on this side of the Severn) and very similar to where I live on the Gwent Levels. The building has settled, giving the tower a noticeable lean; an acquaintance said it was the scariest tower staircase he had ever climbed! Entrance is through the north porch dated 1557, where an ancient door possibly of the same date leads into the church. The stone-flagged floors are

delightfully uneven, and the nave has a mixture of box pews and benches, the latter totally plain apart from the back of the one by the door, which has a crenellated top rail and a pleasing finial. Saw marks can be seen on the back boards of the benches and simple repairs have been effected a long time ago by the local blacksmith, using simple iron plates to reinforce the joints between bench end and back rail.

The seventeenth-century pulpit sits precariously on a simple base of vertical boards; it has the usual Jacobean arches in the upper panels and the book ledge is



Church of the Holy Saviour, Puxton. Interior with people! Note the Jacobean pulpit and hourglass stand and the saw marks visible on the back of one of the benches. *Photo Linda Hall*



The back of the benches by the north door is decorated with a crenellated top rail and a simple finial. *Photo Linda Hall*



Simple blacksmith repair to a bench end. Note the incised crosses which may be apotropaic marks. *Photo Linda Hall*



Seventeenth-century altar rails with simple turned balusters and finials and lunette carving along the rail. *Photo Linda Hall*



Two W's carved on a bench rail; apotropaic (Virgin of Virgins) or simply someone's initials? *Photo Linda Hall*



Fine seventeenth-century chest in the base of the tower, decorated with three large lunettes. *Photo Linda Hall*

supported on twisted iron brackets. Identical brackets support the iron hourglass holder in the reveal of the adjacent window. Near the pulpit is an unusual survival, the fragmentary remains of the rood loft left embedded in the wall when the structure was sawn off and removed. South of the chancel arch the clerk's desk, which goes with the pulpit, blocks the lower door to the rood loft stair; the upper doorway is blocked but still visible.

There is more seventeenth-century woodwork in the chancel, where the altar rails have simple turned balusters and finials; the lunette carving along the top rail is similar to the decoration on the fine local chest apparently abandoned in the base of the tower with assorted other items. The chest has seen better days,

with iron straps holding the ends to the front and back panels. The front panel has split through the carving, which consists of three large lunettes with stylised foliage between. There is a single plain lock plate, suggesting original use in a domestic context, but three large hinged straps were added to the lid, with hasps on the front panel, so that the vicar and churchwardens could each have a padlock key to provide the necessary security.

Commandment boards, ledger stones, a royal arms of George III dated 1775 and a tub font with a cover made of plain but dramatic scrolls (possibly modern?) complete the picture, and a black and white church cat supervised our visit to this most interesting church.

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