



St Andrew's Church

Sherborne St John

Originally dating from around 1150, St Andrew's is a much changed church. Only the present west and south walls of the nave, as well as the south door and the font remain from that date. The tower was built about 100 years later, while the choir was added around 1300, and altered in 1345, when the lancet windows were replaced. The north aisle is relatively new having been added in 1854.

Indeed St Andrew's has undergone many changes, often as a result of its connection with the important families of the area. The first of these is the De Brocas family, distinguished servants of the Crown. In 1353 Bernard De Brocas bought the neighbouring Beaurepaire estate from John St John. In 1395 he left £700 for the building of the Brocas Chapel.

As well as the De Brocas connection the influence of another major family is seen in St Andrew's. In 1660 Chaloner Chute, speaker of the House of Commons, bought the Vyne, beginning the long association of his family with the Church. Examples of their generosity include the repair of the tower along with the donation of the spire, by Elizabeth Chute in 1834; and the addition of the north aisle in 1854, by William Wiggett Chute in an attempt to relieve the unemployment of the time.

Visitors entering the church through the **south porch** can see the broken remains of a wall memorial to its donors. The porch was added in 1533, and the inscription gives the name of the donor as 'Iamys Spier'. The **door arch** predates the porch, being the Norman original.



**MAD BY HENRI
SLY 1634
W.M.I.B.**

Turning to the right as you walk through the door is the **pulpit**, dating from 1634. Made of dark oak, and consisting of a six sided drum, it is unusual because its creator autographed it. Alongside the initials of the donors can be seen the words **MAD BY HENRY SLY**; most craftsmen were a little more self-effacing.

As you face the altar, on the east wall of the chancel, another eyecatching feature is the **memorial to Richard Atkins**. Made of alabaster, a bust of the donor stands on a pedestal against a background of black slate. It dates from 1635. His connection with the church is through his marriage into the Sandys family, at that time owners of the Vyne.

The most notable feature of the church is the **Brocas tomb and chapel**. A pair of effigies creates a border to the chapel. They are of Ralph Pexall and his wife Edith Brocas, heiress to the Brocas estate, who died around 1535. Their effigies are apparently carved by the same hand as those found in Thruxton church, that of an Italian artist brought over by Lord Sandys, the renaissance detail being the same in both cases. Both figures hold hearts in upraised hands.

The **chapel** itself was completed in 1420. It was intended as a family mausoleum, and its earliest **brass** predates it; it is of Raulin and Margaret Brocas, his sister, and dates from 1360. Other brasses are of Bernard Brocas in armour with a skeleton and shroud; John Brocas with his two wives, both named Anne (note the change of headress), and William Brocas.

NOTE: A guide to the Brasses of the De Brocas family is available separately.



The glass in the Chapel is mixed, some, dated 1638 is rather poor, but the coloured glass is Dutch of the early 16th Century and is the best of its kind in Hampshire.



The **Iron helmet** of the north wall of the chapel has been the cause of arguments, with regard to its origin. Different opinions have come from various experts from the Tower of London armouries section. On one occasion it was given as 16th Century German, and on another as English, dating around 1565. A second helmet was unfortunately stolen several years ago.

Close to the chapel hangs a **Shield of the Royal arms**, dating from 1660. Along with several memorials from the same period, it is symbolic of the royalist political feeling found in the area. The dates on the memorials ignore the existence of the Commonwealth, as do a similar pair at nearby All Saints.

Close to the Brocas chapel stands a 17th Century three sided lectern created to take **Fox's Book of Martyrs**. The book was given to the church by the vicar William Jackman, his sister Elizabeth Gardiner and Ebenezer Foreness, rector in 1641. Once common to all parish churches, it is unusual for them to have survived.

A notable feature on several walls of the church, are the **funeral hatchments**. All belong to members of the Chute family and date from the 18th Century. These coats-of-arms were carried at the funeral and were hung in the church 'temporarily'. A more detailed description can be found close to each of the individual hatchments.



Walking to the rear of the church the **font** is an unusual feature. The cover dates from the 17th Century, and is an octagonal oak pyramid, with an iron ring on the top. It has been suggested that it used to have a pulley to raise and lower it, but there is no evidence of this existing in the nearby ceiling and walls. The font itself dates from the foundation of the church.

Historical Comment

The social context of St Andrew's differs from that of the other two churches of the parish, All Saints and Pamber Priory church. The Priory has a towering early history of the Benedictine tradition of Priors and monks, with "The French Connection!", until it became the property of The Queen's College, Oxford. All Saints, a historical gem, was a simple village church, serving its locality in an unpretentious way. St Andrew's, although equally old, displays the presence and influence of two distinguished and dominant local families: the De Brocas, and the Chutes.

The De Brocas family maintained its family seat at Beaurepaire in Sherborne St John from 1353 until 1883. The family flourished under the Plantagenet Kings, Edward III, and Richard II. When however Sir Bernard Brocas became involved in the attempt to overthrow Henry IV and restore Richard to the throne he was beheaded, in 1400. The family never again enjoyed the same prosperity or closeness to the Kings of England.

If the De Brocas were Lords of the Manor, the Chutes took over as Squires, in the 17th Century. In 1650 Chaloner Chute bought the Vyne (1 mile north) which had been built in 1526 by Lord Sandys, Lord Chamberlain to Henry VIII.

The Vyne remained in the Chute family for some 300 years until 1956, throughout which time the connection with Sherborne St John and St Andrew's remained close.

The memorials and plaques evidence the abundant benefactions of a family which inspired much affection. It is worth dwelling a few moments to read about Elizabeth, the wife of William John Chute. She died in 1842 and her memorial is just to the east of the Brocas tomb. She must have been 'some lady' who ".....won to an unusual degree the respect and love of all around her.....!"

Devereux Wiggett Chute enjoyed the esteem of his parishioners during his lifetime, and received a "reward on earth". To celebrate his 60th year as vicar of St Andrew's his parishioners gave him a Piece of Plate, and a Purse of Gold: doubtless he would have shared the latter with his wife, another Elizabeth, who was organist for 47 years, and who started the Jubilee nursing fund in 1887 to provide a nurse and equipment for the sick, infirm and confinements in the village.

Charles Leonard Chute in 1949 gave the meadow, previously loaned to the Parish Council, for recreational purposes. This meadow, known in the 1850's as Stony Croft, was turned into the cricket ground with the cricket club being formed in 1853. Sir Charles Chute, as he had become in 1951, died without heirs and willed his estate to the National Trust; he died in September 1956. A significant date for the village; and the end of an era, as they say.

Twenty years later in 1976 the Parish became the United Benefice of the Sherbornes with Pamber. The then incumbent of Monk Sherborne cum Pamber became rector of St Andrew's, All Saints and Pamber; another significant date for the church.

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