

History of the Church

The blocked round-arched door in the north wall suggests that this was originally a Norman church, i.e. not later than about 1200. The earliest record of a chapel at Bemerton is in 1286. In 1291, the Abbess of Wilton's holdings in the parish are given under the heading 'Fugglestone and Bemerton', indicating that St Peter, Fugglestone and St Andrew by then formed a single parish, with Bemerton as a dependent chapel.

The Decorated style of the oldest surviving windows suggest that the church was rebuilt some time around the end of the 14th century, after which there are no records of changes to the church prior to the 17th century.

It is evident that, when George Herbert took over the incumbency in 1630, the church was in poor repair and that he restored it (and the rectory) at his own expense. In 1649, the Ecclesiastical Commissioners recommended that the chapel of St. Andrew at Bemerton be made a parish church, but the change was not carried out. The church was extensively repaired again in 1776.



Church Interior in about 1880

In 1861 T.H. Wyatt built the larger church of St John, about 200 yards to the west, as a memorial to George Herbert. At the same time there were some significant alterations to St. Andrew's, including the removal of the pulpit, tester, gallery and box pews. These changes were not altogether successful and in 1894-6 a more thorough restoration was carried out by the Diocesan Architect C.E. Ponting.

The most recent major change was in 1933, when new glazing was installed in the west window. The figures depicted are those of Herbert and his great friend, Nicholas Ferrar of Little Gidding.

Although there have been no structural alterations in the past 70 years, major repairs were needed once again in 1979, since which time the age and status of this historic little church has demanded constant attention to the care and maintenance of the fabric.

George Herbert

1593-1633



George Herbert was one of our greatest religious poets. Well born and academically gifted, he appeared to be marked out for high public office, but eventually he turned to the priesthood in 1630 at the age of 37, when he was appointed to be Rector of the parish of Fugglestone-cum-Bemerton. He became known as an exemplary pastor, writing a guide ('The Country Parson') which remains influential to this day. He was also able to refine and develop his poetic skills here and put the finishing touches to 'The Temple', his famous collection of devotional poems. He died of consumption in 1633 and is believed to be buried under the floor of the chancel.

Bemerton Parish

The Parish of Bemerton. The Church of England Parish of Bemerton is in the north-western sector of the city of Salisbury, Wiltshire, and it houses almost a quarter of its population. It also includes the village of Quidhampton. The Parish has three churches—St. Michael's on Bemerton Heath, and St. John's and St. Andrew's in Lower Bemerton.

Lower Bemerton refers to that part of the parish south of the main road between Salisbury and Wilton. Essentially the original village of Bemerton, it was much enlarged towards the end of the 19th century with the coming of the railway.

Parish Office: 01722 328031

Parish Website: www.bemertonparish.org.uk

Published by

The Friends of St. Andrew's Bemerton

A sub-committee of Bemerton Parochial Church Council, our objectives are:

- The upkeep and repair of fabric and fittings of the church.
- The promotion of George Herbert, his writings and ministry.

We do not charge for membership but rely on donations from Friends and visitors. For further information please see our leaflet.

© 2011

St. Andrew's Church

Lower Bemerton

A Guide for Visitors

The Church of George Herbert

www.georgeherbert.org.uk

1 South Door

The **Door** is oak panelled with strap hinges and studs. It is a fine example of its type, and undoubtedly dates from the late 16th or early 17th century. It may well have been installed as part of George Herbert's 1630 renovations.

2 Font

The **Font** is relatively modern, dating back to 1896. It was donated by Mrs. Osmond in memory of her daughter Lucy. The basin of the church's original Early English font is said to have been transferred and incorporated into the font in nearby St. John's Church in 1863.

3 North Recess

The **North Recess** is actually a blocked up Norman doorway which was probably a feature of the original building, although the north wall itself has been almost entirely rebuilt. In this recess is now displayed the **Rectors' Board** which lists incumbents going back to 1344. George Herbert was the 23rd Rector.

4 Windows

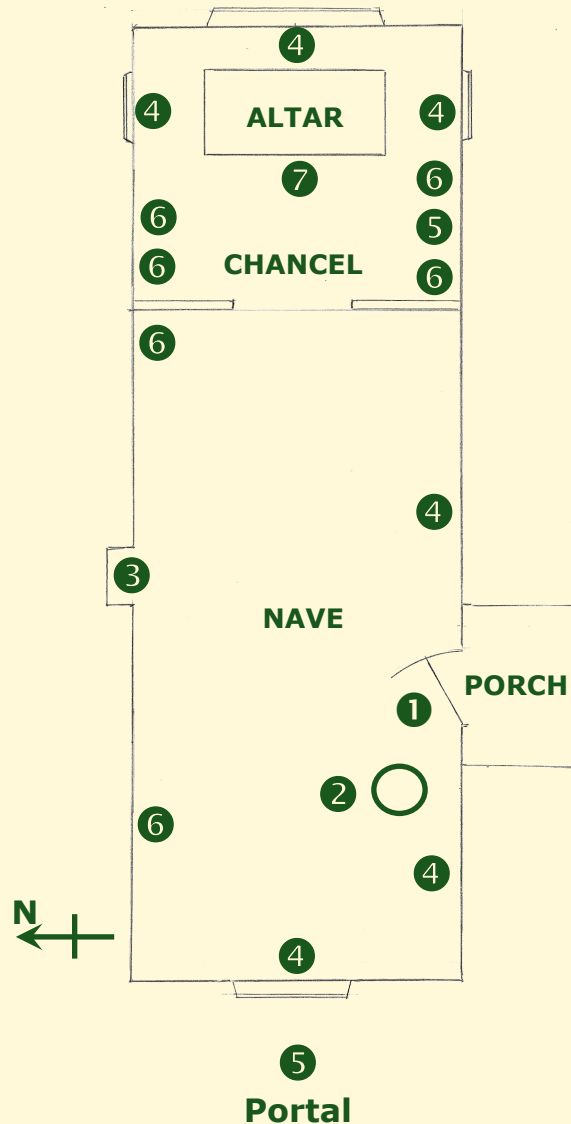
The **East Window** is a Victorian replacement for the original square-headed Perpendicular window. At this time the mullions were of plaster, but these were refashioned in stone as part of the repairs of 1894-6. The stained glass was created by Lavers & Barraud in 1866. It features the crucifixion of Christ, and is a memorial to Lord Sidney Herbert of Lea (d.1861).

The **North and South Chancel Windows** also have 1860s stained glass by Lavers & Barraud, and depict St. Andrew and St. Christopher, and St. Elizabeth and St. George respectively. The two-light south window itself dates back to the 14th century; the north window is a Victorian imitation.

The **South East Nave Window** is of the Decorated period (c.1310-1340). It has two ogee plain glass lights and a quatrefoil under an ogee outer arch with flowing tracery. The smaller two-light window in the south wall on the other side of the entrance door is probably of the same period.

The **West Window** has its origin in the late 14th or early 15th century, but the stained glass was created in 1935 by Caroline Townshend and Joan Howson to mark the tercentenary of George Herbert's death. It depicts him and Nicholas Ferrar, his friend and publisher. The quatrefoil above has the arms of Herbert's kinsmen, the Earls of Pembroke.

What to look for in St. Andrew's Church



The **South Wall Portal** with the wooden shutter and oak lintel probably dates back to the 17th century. Its true purpose is not known. It may have been for the disbursement of alms, or possibly to afford a view of the chancel from outside the building for those afflicted with leprosy or the plague; such a portal is known to architects as a hagioscope, but is more commonly called a 'lepers' squint'.

6 Memorials

Most memorials in the church are to former incumbents and their families. For **George Herbert (1593-1633)** there is merely a simple plate on the north wall of the chancel, inscribed 'GH 1632*'; he is believed to be buried under the chancel floor but his grave is unmarked. A marble tablet on the same wall is inscribed to the 29th Rector **John Norris (1657-1711)**, a noted philosopher and poet. Nearby is a memorial to Bemerton's longest serving incumbent **Wellesley Pole Piggot (1803-90)**, who was Rector for no less than 54 years.

On the south wall of the chancel is a plate commemorating **Francis Warre (1834-1917)**. He was responsible for the 1896 alterations and, with his brother, donated the marble sanctuary pavement. The adjacent memorial is to Archdeacon **William Coxe (1747-1828)** and his wife, whose graves are marked by the two small floor tiles marked 'WC 1828' and 'EC 1830', just in front of the altar.

At the west end of the nave on the north wall are memorials to the 32nd incumbent **John Hawes (1719-87)** and members of his family. Two other small memorials in the nave are worthy of note. Carpenter **George Powell (d.1900)** and stonemason **Henry Barrett (d.1922)** carried out the 1896 alterations and were largely responsible for the interior we see today.

*Herbert died on 1st March 1632 according to the pre-1752 calendar, under which the new year began on March 25th. The year of his death is usually taken as 1633 to conform to the modern calendar.

7 Altar Frontal

The **Embroidered Frontal** was designed by Jane Lemon MBE and worked by the Sarum Embroiderers Guild in 1988. It illustrates George Herbert's poem 'The Flower'.

The Church Bell

The **Bell** is housed in a small turret above the gable at the west end of the church. The turret is thought to have been added towards the end of the 18th century and was rebuilt as part of the 1860s alterations. The bell itself was probably cast at Reading in the mid-16th century. It is a rare example of an 'alphabet bell', having cast black-letter capitals around the rim. There is little doubt that this was the bell rung by George Herbert to call his parishioners to worship, and it is still tolled before services today.