



Church of the Holy Cross, Seend / Information portal

The Nave

Let us travel back in time to the mid 1400's, England was a Roman Catholic country and worshipping in a country chapel or church then was very different to the stiff and formal fashion which came following the Reformation. You need to imagine the nave without its pews as it would have been then, with side chapels, images and altars dedicated to various saints. According to the Bede-Roll of around 1500 there are listed the provisions made by departed parishioners for masses to be said and candles lit on special anniversaries for the welfare of their souls (original held in the British Museum). Burning lamps and tapers was considered beneficial before various images... the High Cross (a crucifix in the Rood Loft, the staircase to which is still visible), Our Lady in the Chancel, Our Lady in the Porch, Our Lady in St Nicholas Aisle (the North Aisle?), Our Lady in the South Aisle, Our Lady of Pity, St Christopher, St Katherine, St Nicholas and St Syth (Osyth, protector against fire and water). Parishioners would have moved freely about the stone floor to visit one image or another and light their tapers according to their needs, material or spiritual. The walls would have been adorned with biblical images in bright colours explaining the Christian liturgy for those who could not read or understand the Latin spoken by the priest. As a service progressed, more and more people would have filled the nave and side aisles in readiness for the main event – the consecration of the bread and the wine at the climax of the mass.

So the nave you see now is a product of the post Tudor period, there were pine pews but these were replaced with the oak ones you see now in 1909, this picture shows the work in progress...





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In front of the chancel arch, on the south side, note the staircase and doorway which originally led to the roof-loft. In the niche below the staircase is a carved stone bust with traces of colouring, disfigured during either the Reformation or the English Civil War. There is also a fragment of a fresco on the wall described by Edward Kite (about 1900) as showing a man with red hair and beard, cap and cloak.



High on the walls below the clerestories you can see the black diamond shaped hatchments. These show the arms of the families of Schomberg (north wall, east), Bruges (north wall west and Awdry (south wall). It was the custom in the 18th and 19th centuries to display these escutcheon boards outside the family houses after a death and during the period of mourning, after which they were often hung in the parish church.

The roof, of Spanish chestnut, is supported on finely carved corbells, one of which shows a man-eating monster, and two other angels with shields bearing emblems of the passion. The first organ, installed in 1830, was replaced in 1858 by a new one, built by James Clark of Bath. In 1888 it was rebuilt by Sweetland of Bath and placed in a new loft at the west end. An electrically pumped blower was fitted in 1940.

The fine brass candelabra came from St Michael's, Melksham when they had gas lighting installed there in 1838.

From 1726 to 1888 there was a gallery over the two western bays of the nave, which in 1859 provided seating for ten adults and one hundred and fifty children. When it was removed the west end was improved and new windows



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made in the west and south wall. Part of the gallery is to be seen in the ringing chamber at the base of the tower...



Above the doors entering the ringing chamber are two painted boards telling of bequests from local wealthy families to the poor of the parish.



With acknowledgement to 'Seend A Wiltshire Village Past and Present' by Edward Bradby.