

## RELIGIOUS HISTORY

A church was already standing at Brixton Deverill by 1086.<sup>205</sup> The living was a rectory, served as a single cure, until it was united with neighbouring livings in 1972 to form the parish of the Deverills.<sup>206</sup>

### Advowson

The church, like the manor, was held by Brictric until the Conquest and was subsequently given by Queen Maud (d. 1083), to the abbey of Bec-Hellouin.<sup>207</sup> The abbot was patron of the church until *c.* 1208, when he conceded his right to the bishop of Salisbury in return for the foundation of the prebendary of Ogbourne.<sup>208</sup> The Crown presented a candidate to the living on three successive occasions between 1571 and 1632, only once because the see was vacant.<sup>209</sup> Following the abolition of both monarchy and episcopacy, John Smith was presented under the Great Seal in 1653.<sup>210</sup> The advowson was presumably restored to the bishop at the Restoration.<sup>211</sup>

### The Church of St Michael the Archangel

The church occupies a site next to the manor house, at the heart of the medieval village. The present much-restored building comprises of a chancel, a nave, and a west tower. The original fabric of the church is 13th century, and a good chancel arch with triple shafts remains from this period. The lower part of the tower is also 13th

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<sup>205</sup> *VCH Wilts. II*, 132.

<sup>206</sup> Youngs, *Admin. Units*, I, 536–37.

<sup>207</sup> *VCH Wilts. II*, 132; Morgan, *Abbey of Bec*, 138–39.

<sup>208</sup> Hoare, *Mod. Wilts. Heytesbury*, 5; Morgan, *Abbey of Bec*, 139. *VCH Wilts. III*, 160.

<sup>209</sup> *Cal. Pat.* 1569–1572, p. 415; 1596–1597, p. 176. Williams (ed.), *Subscription Book 1620–40*, 56.

<sup>210</sup> *Walker Revised*, ed. Matthews, 371.

<sup>211</sup> ‘Brixton Deverill (CCEd Location ID 1733)’, *The Clergy of the Church of England Database 1540–1835* <http://www.theclergydatabase.org.uk>, accessed 2 June, 2009; Hoare, *Mod. Wilts. Heytesbury*, 5.

century, and the belfry stage was added in the 15th century.<sup>212</sup> The nave and chancel were rebuilt *c.* 1760 at the instigation of Edward Frowd, lessee of Manor farm,<sup>213</sup> and again in 1862, when the chancel was lengthened to two bays and a vestry attached to its north-east side.<sup>214</sup> The rector William Barnes, who is commemorated by a Gothic tablet in the chancel,<sup>215</sup> added a spire to the tower in 1852,<sup>216</sup> which was removed in 1899 on account of its dangerous condition.<sup>217</sup> Restoration work was carried out by Henry Messenger in 1928,<sup>218</sup> when the roof was also decayed,<sup>219</sup> by Harding and Elgar of Salisbury in 1937,<sup>220</sup> and by Oswald S. Brakspear of Corsham in the later 20th century.<sup>221</sup> A large stone coffin stands outside the church door.<sup>222</sup>

Inside the church, the tower arch and plastered nave ceiling both date from 1760.<sup>223</sup> The interior was refurbished in 1862 in memory of Barnes: the chancel arch was enlarged and stained glass windows inserted; a gallery was removed, the pulpit and reading desk repositioned, and new pews installed to increase the seating capacity to over 100.<sup>224</sup> A pipe organ was installed on the north side of the nave in 1878,<sup>225</sup> and eight copper lamps to commemorate Queen Victoria's diamond jubilee.<sup>226</sup> A Victorian oak reredos originally painted with the Creed, the Ten Commandments and the Lord's Prayer, and later with images of Moses and Christ carrying the cross flanking a picture entitled 'The Glory of the Cross', which

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<sup>212</sup> This section is based on the following sources: Pevsner, *Wilts.* (2nd Edn), 144; DOE, 'Bldgs List', Brixton Deverill, 27; Hoare, *Mod. Wilts.* Heytesbury, 5–6; C.E. Ponting, 'Notes on the Churches in the Neighbourhood of Warminster', *WAM*, 27 (1894), 271–72.

<sup>213</sup> WSA, D 1/61/4/22; Hoare, *Mod. Wilts.* Heytesbury, 5.

<sup>214</sup> WSA, D 1/61/12/6; 1180/3, 11; 1961/5.

<sup>215</sup> DOE, 'Bldgs List', Brixton Deverill, 27.

<sup>216</sup> WSA, 1180/10.

<sup>217</sup> WSA, 1180/3.

<sup>218</sup> Slocombe (ed.), *Architects and Bldg. Craftsmen 1*, pp. 63, 93.

<sup>219</sup> WSA, D1/61/69/57.

<sup>220</sup> Slocombe (ed.), *Architects and Building Craftsmen 1*, pp. 63, 93.

<sup>221</sup> P. Slocombe (ed.), *Architects and Building Craftsmen with Work in Wilts, Part 2* (Trowbridge, 2006), 31.

<sup>222</sup> Hoare, *Mod. Wilts.* Heytesbury, 5.

<sup>223</sup> WSA, D 1/61/4/22.

<sup>224</sup> WSA, 1961/53; *Warminster Miscellany*, Aug. 1862.

<sup>225</sup> W. Middlebrook, *Warminster Villages* (Warminster, 1972), 12 (copy in WSHC, Local Studies Colln.).

<sup>226</sup> WSA, 1180/3.

commemorated the son of Revd A. F. Richardson who died in the First World War, was removed in 1956.<sup>227</sup> The choir stalls were removed in 1964,<sup>228</sup> and the organ was replaced by a small electronic organ in 1969.<sup>229</sup> The Romanesque stone font, which has a 17th century font cover, was transferred from the parish church of Imber in 1951,<sup>230</sup> to replace the Gothic Revival style font of 1862.<sup>231</sup> The 17th-century carved panels displayed on the north wall of the chancel may have been part of a parish poor box. The church had three bells in 1553,<sup>232</sup> two of which were sold in 1760 to help pay for renovation work.<sup>233</sup> The remaining bell of c. 1400, from the Salisbury foundry, bears the inscription “✠ AVE GRACIA”.<sup>234</sup> No plate was recorded at the church in 1553, but a cheap set made of white metal was purchased in 1840.<sup>235</sup> The parish registers begin in 1653,<sup>236</sup> the date William Cooper was appointed as parish register.<sup>237</sup>

## Religious Life

The abbey of Bec may have maintained a monastic cell in the parish until the early 13th century; if so, the resident monks would have influenced local religious life.<sup>238</sup> The living was not rich, and for much of its history the rectors held it in plurality with other livings, appointing curates, or in some cases neglecting their duties.<sup>239</sup> In 1389, while the rector Richard Salfe was attempting to exchange his benefice

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<sup>227</sup> WSA, 1180/11; 1961/52.

<sup>228</sup> WSA, 1961/52; D 1/61/113/61.

<sup>229</sup> WSA, D 1/61/125/33.

<sup>230</sup> WSA, 1961/52, 54; D 1/61/100/102.

<sup>231</sup> A.G. Randle Buck, ‘Some Wiltshire Fonts, Part III’, *WAM*, 54 (1951–52), 202.

<sup>232</sup> M.E.C. Walcott, ‘Inventories of Church Goods, and Chantries of Wilts.’, *WAM*, 12 (1870), 366.

<sup>233</sup> WSA, D 1/61/4/22.

<sup>234</sup> W.C. Lucas, ‘Bells of the County of Wilts.’, *WAM*, 2 (1855), 334; H.B. Walters, *Church Bells of Wilts.* (Devizes, 1927–29), 41.

<sup>235</sup> WSA, 1180/10; J.E. Nightingale, *Church Plate of Wilts.* (Salisbury, 1891), 84.

<sup>236</sup> WSA, 1180/2–8; 1961/4–5a; see also transcripts of bishops’ registers, from 1606.

<sup>237</sup> Steve Hobbs (ed.), *Gleanings*, 29.

<sup>238</sup> Pierrepont, ‘The Manor of Brixton Deverill’, 55.

<sup>239</sup> For a list of Rectors, see Phillipps, *Institutions, passim*; ‘Brixton Deverill (CCed Location ID 1733)’, *Clergy Database*. One example of possible negligence was the failure of the Rector to make a return to the Bishop’s visitation in 1783: Ransome (ed.), *Visitation Queries 1783*, p. 5.

fraudulently, according to allegations,<sup>240</sup> William Remmesbury was able to teach Lollard doctrines to clergy and laity alike in Brixton Deverill and neighbouring parishes, in church and churchyards, taverns and private discussions.<sup>241</sup> Salfe resigned the living shortly afterwards.<sup>242</sup> The parish had a chaplain in 1394, and two 15th-century rectors may previously have been curates.<sup>243</sup> Edmund Marmyon, whom the Crown appointed to the rectory in 1572,<sup>244</sup> was apparently resident, as he possessed one caliver in 1588, when the diocese surveyed weaponry belonging to the clergy.<sup>245</sup> Robert Wright, rector from 1596,<sup>246</sup> was also bishop of Bristol from 1623 until his translation to Coventry and Lichfield in 1632, upon which he resigned the living.<sup>247</sup> He was replaced by John Carse, another Crown appointee, and a prebend of Bedminster and Redcliffe in 1637.<sup>248</sup>

During the Interregnum, the congregations of Brixton Deverill, Kingston Deverill and Monkton Deverill recommended in 1650 that they should be united into a single parish, but this was not acted upon.<sup>249</sup> John Smith was presented to the living in 1653,<sup>250</sup> and still held it in 1662,<sup>251</sup> despite an institution of 1660 for one Robert Harris.<sup>252</sup> The bishop subsequently presented his nephew, Thomas

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<sup>240</sup> *Reg. Waltham*, 70, 172; *Cal. Close*, 1389–1392, p. 187.

<sup>241</sup> *Reg. Waltham*, 169–71.

<sup>242</sup> *Reg. Waltham*, 76.

<sup>243</sup> John Conge, rector 1411–13, was referred to as ‘chaplain’ and appointed an executor in the will of John Oky, rector of Brixton Deverill 1410–11, and again at his collation; *Reg. Hallum*, 35, 90. His successor, Nicholas Sexpenne, was also referred to as ‘chaplain’ when he was collated to the living; *ibid.*, 59.

<sup>244</sup> *Cal. Pat.* 1569–1572, p. 415.

<sup>245</sup> W.A. Webb, ‘The Provision of Waqrlike Furniture amongst the Clergie of the Dioces of Sarum, 1588’, *WAM*, 39 (1915–17), 107.

<sup>246</sup> *Cal. Pat.*, 1594–1595, p. 176.

<sup>247</sup> ‘Brixton Deverill (CCEd Location ID 1733)’, *Clergy Database*, accessed 2 June, 2009; Williams (ed.), *Subscription Book 1620–40*, p. 56.

<sup>248</sup> *Cal. SP Dom.* 1637, p. 67; J.M. Horn (ed.) *Fasti Ecclesiae Anglicanae 1541–1857*, VI: *Salisbury Diocese* (1986), 24; ‘Brixton Deverill (CCEd Location ID 1733)’, *Clergy Database*, Accessed 2 June, 2009.

<sup>249</sup> Bodington, ‘Church Survey’, 257.

<sup>250</sup> *Walker Revised*, ed. Matthews, 371.

<sup>251</sup> Hobbs (ed.), *Gleanings*, 29.

<sup>252</sup> WSA, D 1/2/22.

Henchman, who also held a prebend at the cathedral as archdeacon of Wiltshire.<sup>253</sup> Some nonconformist worship took place: in 1676 two nonconformists were recorded in Brixton Deverill;<sup>254</sup> and in 1792 the house of Richard Collins was licensed as an Independent meeting house.<sup>255</sup>

For much of the 18th century, pluralism and non-residence were common; the rectory was often held with the vicarages of Warminster or Potterne, also livings in the gift of the bishop, and a number of clergy were also canons at the cathedral.<sup>256</sup> Curates too generally served Brixton Deverill with one or more of the neighbouring parishes in this sparsely populated area. The rector was paying his curate a stipend of £30 in 1802,<sup>257</sup> £40 in 1808,<sup>258</sup> and £60 in 1831, when the curate was also allowed to live in the Rectory house.<sup>259</sup> Close connections with the cathedral may have contributed to the parish remaining firmly Anglican after the Restoration. However, a house was licensed for nonconformist worship in 1843,<sup>260</sup> and in 1848 the Independent Methodists received a licence for a place of worship.<sup>261</sup> In 1852, rector William Barnes reminded the parish of the twin dangers of Catholicism and dissent, writing: 'We live in an age of Religious excitement when feeling and fashion have far more influence with many than sound judgement and plain scriptural Faith.'<sup>262</sup> His restoration of the church was undoubtedly a response to the rise of nonconformity in the parish.

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<sup>253</sup> *Alumni Cantab. to 1751*, III, 23; 'Brixton Deverill (CCEd Location ID 1733)', *Clergy Database*, accessed 2 June, 2009.

<sup>254</sup> *Wilts. N&Q III*, 537; *Compton Census*, ed. Whiteman, 125.

<sup>255</sup> Chandler (ed.), *Meeting House Certificates*, 40.

<sup>256</sup> *VCH Wilts. III*, 197; *VII*, 211; *VIII*, 118, 120; Hoare, *Mod. Wilts. Heytesbury*, 6, citing a monumental inscription in the church.

<sup>257</sup> WSA, 1961/47.

<sup>258</sup> WSA, D 1/8/3/14.

<sup>259</sup> WSA, D 1/8/3/39.

<sup>260</sup> Chandler (ed.), *Meeting House Certificates*, 157.

<sup>261</sup> *Kelly's Dir. Wilts.* (1848).

<sup>262</sup> WSA, 1180/3.

During the Second World War, the rector was a prominent member of the Parish Committee,<sup>263</sup> and the role of the Church was prominent in the Deverills Festival of 1976.<sup>264</sup> In 1994, although there was still a service in the church at least once a week, the congregation was dwindling through its failure to recruit younger members.<sup>265</sup> In 2008 under the team ministry, services were held at Brixton Deverill church every two to three weeks.<sup>266</sup>

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<sup>263</sup> WSA, F 2/851/3.

<sup>264</sup> WSA, 1180/18.

<sup>265</sup> WSA, D 115/3/8.

<sup>266</sup> *Parish News: The Deverills & Crockerton*, Dec. 2008.