



Friends of St Owen's

There has probably been a church on this site since the 13th century and worship continues to this day.

In early wills dated 1511 and 1533 it is referred to as St. Andrew, Bromham and in 1532 it is recorded as St. Andwyne. The name St. Owen does not appear until the mid 19th century, but no reason for the change is known.

The name Owen was often spelt Audoen which is similar to Andwyne, but however it evolved it is now the only church on the British mainland dedicated to St. Owen. (There were originally five but the others no longer exist due to amalgamation or closure.)

St. Owen (Ouen or Audoin) (610-684) was Archbishop of Rouen. He encouraged scholarship, founded monasteries and fought abuses in state and in church. He was sent on several important, political missions by his King. He is buried in the famous church dedicated to him at Rouen



Interior before 1868



Interior 2007



Interior 2009

NAVE

After entering the church through the South porch the first thing you will notice is the chairs. The pews were sold in 2008, mostly to parishioners, and they were replaced with the chairs which you see now. The reason for this was that it was easier to move chairs about to allow for more flexibility of worship and for other activities to take place in the church.

The pews had been in the church since 1868 when the church underwent a big refurbishment to bring it

into line with the style of worship practised then. They were made of pine wood stained to look like oak. We have retained a reminder in the south porch with the seat backs for the stone benches, which have been made from the modesty prayer rails which were at the front of each block of pews.

The new chairs have made the church look lighter and less cluttered and show off the architectural beauty of the building. They are also more comfortable to sit on and are easier to move and stack than their predecessors. Many were funded by donations and there are small plaques to indicate this.

Now, inside the church, turn left towards the tower.

On the left, on the south wall, is a memorial tablet to the memory of Samuel Stafferton, 20 years a clerk of this parish (not the Parish Council which started in 1894), who died 27th July 1893, aged 57 years.

Further along is a tapestry that was made and presented by the Women's Institute in 1972. The tapestry was designed by Mrs. Winifred Harris and every member of the Institute at that time took part in its production by doing some of the stitching. The design incorporates many items of special note in the parish (such as the bridge, church, river, farms, and local wildlife).

Above this is a memorial tablet to Rosamund, the wife of Robert Mesham M.A. Vicar of the parish. She died on 10th October 1819, aged 52 years.

At the West end of the aisle is the Tower room with the big West door and a small door leading to the belfry and tower. The Tower houses eight bells – 6 which were recast after the fire of 1906, and two more which were added in 1934. They are rung regularly on Sundays and special occasions. The fire of 1906 destroyed all the inside of the tower leaving the bells hanging on their then recently replaced metal beams. In the reconstruction, a ringing room was built at first floor level so that the bells are now rung from half way up the tower.

The screen dividing the tower from the main church is made of ash with glazed panels. It is designed to open back fully to allow more seating at major services. The screen was erected in 1992 and was donated by the Friends of St. Owen's. Much of the funding came from donations made in memory of parishioners and their names are listed in a book.

In 1993 the Friends commissioned the cupboards and furniture in the tower room to match the screen. They were made by a local craftsman, John Cavill.



If you now turn round to face the altar you will see the octagonal Font which is made of clunch. It is 15th century work restored. The carved oak cover is Victorian (1868). On the table beside it you will find books commemorating each baptism since 1953.

If you turn towards the North Aisle you will see, fastened to the Westernmost pillar of the three arches, an ancient alms box with three locks (one each for the Vicar and two churchwardens).

However, this box is no longer in use; it has been replaced by one on the end of the bookshelves just inside the south door.

NORTH AISLE

Above the North porch you will see a Consecration Cross, thought to be Saxon in origin. This was found under the old three-tiered pulpit which, until 1868, stood on the North side of the Chancel Arch.

At the west end of the North Aisle is a coloured marble monument to Lord John Trevor, who died 27th September 1794, aged 69 years. It was erected on the instructions of his wife, Lady Elizabeth Trevor.

Further east along the North wall is a brass memorial tablet. This is the parish War Memorial to those who died in the Great War 1914-19 and underneath to those who died in the Second World War 1939-45.

Close to this is a memorial to W.H.Allen of Bromham House (later Bromham Hospital and now converted to living accommodation) who died on 3rd September 1926. He was the founder of the Bedford Engineering firm which until recently bore his name. He was a former Churchwarden of this church.

Banners:

Several banners will be seen around the church:

The SOYA banner (St. Owen's Youth Association), was made by the nuns at Turvey Abbey, from designs submitted by members of the time. The daffodil on it is in memory of Barbara Randall, a former churchwarden.

The Sunday School banner was also made at Turvey Abbey.

TOMB

Moving to the east end of the North Aisle we reach the alabaster Elizabethan tomb with the figure of a recumbent knight. The heraldry shows it to be in memory of Sir Lewis Dyve, who died in 1592, and his wife Mary (daughter of Sir William Strickland), who were the father and mother of Sir John Dyve, whose first wife, (the daughter of Sir Anthony Denny), is also commemorated on this monument.

On the wall beam above the monument are the initials J.B.D. and the date 1603, with the Dyve arms between, which probably indicates that Sir John Dyve and his wife, Beatrice, had the tomb erected in that year. (This Beatrice secondly married Sir John Digby, who was created 1st Earl of Bristol, and her two sons, Sir John Dyve and George Digby, (afterwards 2nd Earl of Bristol), were notable figures on the side of Charles 1st.) There is also a bracket which once held a banner, probably that of Sir Lewis Dyve.

At the base of the tomb is a stone slab let into the floor and inscribed

'Here lyeth interred the body of Capt. Lord Dyve, son of Sir Lewis Dyve, who departed this life on 10th January 1686 at the house at Bromham in the county of Bedford at 46 years of age.'

Before leaving this area look at the north wall itself. This is the oldest part of the church and is a rubble-filled wall of the 13th century. You can just see in the plaster the outline of two windows and a door of much earlier times.

The old pews and wooden floor in the North Aisle were removed in 1991 and the floor replaced with 300-year-old tiles.

SOUTH AISLE

Moving back to the centre aisle of the church you will see, on the east side of the South Door, a memorial tablet to Robert Richards, Vicar of this parish for 46 years. He died on 23rd February 1758, aged 78 years.

Above this is a tablet to William Richards, son of the late Thos. Richards, Vicar of this parish. William was for twenty years a surgeon in the 15th Regiment of Foot. He died suddenly on arrival in England from the Bermudas. He was buried in the London parish Church of St. Sepulchre. He died 23rd December 1829, aged 46 years.

Lower down on the wall you will see a frame with the list of the Vicars of this parish beginning with Ranulf de Bedford in 1235.

Close to the pulpit is a door (the key of which was discovered again in 1985) behind which are the stone steps leading to the 15th century upper rood loft door which can be seen to the right of the Chancel arch and which once led out onto the rood gallery. The loft, screen and gallery were dismantled in 1868 when the Chancel was rebuilt and the Chancel arch enlarged.

There is also an old hour glass stand with a modern hour glass now standing in it.

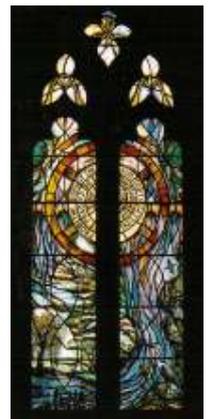
THE CHANCEL

The Chancel was rebuilt at the expense of the Hon. Elianore Rice Trevor in 1868 and the work is attributed to William Butterfield (a famous Victorian Architect whose family lived at Milton Ernest). At this time the Chancel arch was made bigger and included in the refurbishment was a new oak pulpit an, reading desk and font cover.

On the north and south walls above the choir stalls can be seen a tournament helmet, swords and a coronet. These are examples of funereal armour which would be placed on the coffin for the funeral. They probably date from the funeral of Sir Lewis Dyve and are allowed to be placed in the church because a knight is buried here. The armour was restored at the Tower of London Armoury in 1988.



A stained glass window to commemorate the Millennium replaced a plain window on the south side in December 2003. It was designed, made and installed by Michael D Stokes of Edwinstowe and paid for by parishioners and friends of the church.



It depicts the rural life of the village with the river, mill and bridge and the flora and fauna of the area. It was dedicated on 18th January 2004 by the Venerable Paul Hughes, Archdeacon of Bedford. On the South wall is a brass memorial plaque to Rev. C J E. Smith, Vicar 1880-1900 who died on 23rd December 1900, aged 65.

BRASS

On the floor of the Chancel there is a fine brass (details in the frame on the end of the choir stall) depicting an armoured knight between two ladies, purporting to be Sir John Dyve 1535. However, it was originally made for an ancestor of his, Thomas Wydeville, a century earlier in 1435. Before the Chancel was rebuilt the brass was near to the north wall at the entrance to the chapel. If you wish to view the brass please ask a representative of the church to show you.

When in the Chancel look at the carved heads on the choir stalls on the south side. One has his tongue hanging out – no doubt the joke of the carver.

SANCTUARY

Move into the Sanctuary where you will see, on the South wall, an ancient piscina with a ribbed canopy and a sedilia.



Above this is a stained glass window which was erected in obedience to the will of Maud Isabella Wingfield, and unveiled 29th April 1951, as a thanksgiving to Bromham for the home it gave to her and her orphaned brothers and sisters from 1864-88. It depicts St. Owen and St Alban and if you look closely, you will find Bromham church and St Albans Abbey silhouetted into the design.



In 1982, a new safe for the reservation of the Sacrament, was installed in the Aumbrey on the North wall. The carved safe with its oak surround and the silver lamp are the result of donations by the families of late parishioners. Now hidden behind the safe is a tablet commemorating the rebuilding of the Chancel by the Hon. Elianore Rice Trevor.

Depending on the date of your visit you may see the green Altar frontal. This was donated in memory of Graham Gooding and matching vestments were given in memory of Donald and Edith Warren. They were designed and made at Turvey Abbey and depict the Holy Dove and Christ's love bursting into the world.

The candles referred to on the plaque, as given in memory of Charles Browning, are now in the vestry. The present Crucifix and candlesticks were bought in 1981.

Above the Altar is a modern stained glass window erected in 2002.

It was donated by John and Angela Cleverly, residents of the village, and was made and designed by Michael D Stokes of Edwinstowe.

The design is based round the theme 'New Beginnings, Resurrection and Hope'. (Look closely to see the various symbols - alpha and omega - the beginning and the end, the Cross, the Tree of Life, the River of Life, the fish, and the more you look the more you will find but do not forget to look back at the overall design before you leave the Chancel.)



The outside of the Chancel roof was completely repaired in 1988 and the inside in 1989. Roughly above the choir pews next to the Dynevor Chapel, a lead box 'time capsule' has been placed in the roof filled with artefacts of the time. It should come to light the next time the roof is repaired.

Near to this pew is a brass plaque to Richard 'Dick' Smith, Churchwarden from 1964 to 1982. He was responsible for much of the excellent condition in which we find the church today.

DYNEVOR CHAPEL

To the north of the Chancel is the Dynevor Chapel. It has a fine stained glass window and was built by Lord Dynevor in 1868 to the memory of his eldest daughter, Frances Emily, who died on 26th November 1863, aged 37 years. Also her husband Edward Ffolliott Wingfield who died on 26th September 1865, aged 42 years. Also William Ffolliott, 5th son who died on 8th December 1861 aged 8 months.

Under this window are two memorial tablets. One is a brass tablet commemorating the restoration of the bells to the memory of Elianore Mary Rice Trevor, born 25th May 1838 and died 12th October 1897.

The other is in memory of Selina Emily Wingfield – the West window and part of the roof were repaired by her

brothers and sisters -21st April 1923.

There is a large memorial tablet to Frances, baroness Dynevor, who was born on 2nd January 1803 and died 30th April 1868.

On the west wall of the chapel, next to the organ, is to be found a fine memorial to Eva Gwenlian, 3rd daughter of the Hon George Rice Trevor who died on 28th July 1842 in her 13th year. This memorial depicts an angel floating up to heaven.

On the opposite side, on the east wall of the Chapel, is a fine memorial to Baron Thos. Trevor who died 19th June 1730, aged 72 years and Lady Dowager Trevor who died 4th December 1746 aged 76 years. There is a vault under the chapel believed to contain 3 or 4 stone coffins.

The organ on the west side of the Chapel can be best viewed from the Chancel through the original, now glassless, window of the former west wall. It was built in 1907 and was electrified and overhauled in 1967. It was last overhauled in 1992 and is now in good condition.

Moving back down the aisle, leave the church by the south door. If you wish to spend a few moments in prayer there are some prayers at the back of this booklet to help you. As you leave you will also see, on the table by the font, postcards and an opportunity to make a donation to the upkeep of the work of this church and the maintenance of this beautiful building.

Once outside, turn and look back at the porch, restored externally in 1993. You will see a flight of steps on the east side leading to a doorway into the upper floor. This is the entrance to a small room (parvise) which once contained a Library. The books were removed about 1982 (after an attempted break in) and placed in the care of the local Archives at Bedford. This was not, however, the right environment to sustain the books and so prevent further deterioration and to make them more available to be seen by the public, in 2008 arrangements were made to hand them over to the care of the National Trust at Canons Ashby in Northants. There, they are receiving some restoration where needed and look very fine in the library.

On the side of the porch is a small carved tablet that reads:

*'This small library was founded and freely given
for the use of the minister of the parish of Bromham
by Thomas Lord Trevor in the year 1740.
No book to be taken out without the leave
of the minister or Lord of the Manor.'*

To the west of the door is a stone seat given in memory of Dick Smith.

If you walk round the outside of the church it will be seen that there is another porch at the North door. The downstairs has now been converted to a kitchen and the small room above houses the central heating boilers. This little room is thought to have been used by visiting priests in earlier centuries .

It is also said that an old lady lived in the room at the turn of the last century.

Continuing round the path to the east there is a small gravestone to Thomas Shefford dated 1697. This is the oldest identified stone in the churchyard.

The main gate of the church is also attributed to William Butterfield and was installed in 1868 when he was involved in rebuilding the Chancel.

The furthest part of the West end of the churchyard was added in 1926 and there is now a further extension added in 2000.

The stone wall surrounding it is a good example of modern use of an old technique and was built by M Farrow Ltd., Stonemasons.

As you leave the church and its surrounds look back once again from the park and reflect on these words from the writing of John Betjeman:

*'On country mornings sharp and clear
The penitent in faith draw near,
And kneeling here below
Partake the Heavenly Banquet spread
Of Sacramental Wine and Bread
And Jesus' presence know.*

*And must that plaintive bell in vain
Plead loud along the dripping lane?
And must the building fall?
Not while we love the Church and live
And of our Charity will give
Our much, our more, our all.'*



Drawing by Christine Clark