

## **More information**

If you would like to know more about the history of the church, as well as its social context within the community, there are a number of articles compiled by the Stithians Local History Group on this church in the booklets 'Aspects of Stithians'.

If you are looking for the old registers of Baptisms, Marriages or Burials, they are now held in the County Record Office in Truro.

In 2013 the Friends of St Stythians Church was established to raise money for the upkeep of the Church and churchyard. We would be very grateful if you would consider either becoming a Friend or making a donation, to keep this wonderful building as a place of learning, beauty and worship.

Thank you

St Stithians is part of the Eight Saints Cluster of Churches which is an informal group of eight congregations; St Piran's, Carharrack; St Paul's, Chacewater; St John and St Petroc, Devoran; St Feock, Feock; St Wenappa, Gwennap; St Piran's, Perran-ar-Worthal; Holy Trinity, St Day; and St Stythians', Stithians. It came into being on 13th January 2011.

Within the Cluster there is also the Stithians Community House which is home to the WAY 2 project <http://stithianscommunityhouse.co.uk/> offering an internship in the Truro Diocese for those exploring the idea of christian vocations. Find out more on the website. <http://www.eightsaints.org.uk/>

# STITHIANS PARISH CHURCH

## A guidebook

### **A prayer for the Parish Church**

Sunday Worship

1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Month - 10:00 am

All Age Worship

Lord God, we give you thanks for this church.

In this holy place we come to affirm your presence and declare your love.

Here we come for healing and renewal.

Here we come to give you praise and thanks for all, who over the centuries have found grace, new hope and forgiveness here.

And may all who come to this holy place be refreshed by your love and peace.

2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of month - 9:30 am

Holy Communion

3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of month - 9:30 am

Holy Communion

4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of month - 9:30 am

Holy Communion

5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Month - 9:30 am

Service of the Word





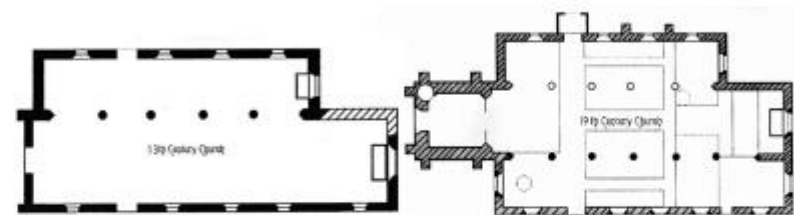
### The Interior of the Church

The interior of the church has changed much throughout its lifetime. Some of these changes and former features of the church have been revealed through plaster stripping and restoration work.

A lot of changes have been made to the structure of the building itself, as over the years the upper part of the west walls have been rebuilt with thinner masonry than was used in the original medieval work, and the north arcade and aisle walls have been heightened by nearly a foot.

Also uncovered was the site of a holy water stoup by the north door, which would have been where the holy water was kept. Near the altar on the north side is the possible site of a reliquary, (a place for relics of the saints), although this is now filled with rubble.

Finally, by observing the piers and arches that run down the center of the church, it is possible to deduce that during the 15<sup>th</sup> Century rebuilding of the church, the old 14<sup>th</sup> Century piers and arches were used, but were put back in the wrong places, leading to the curious situation of 14<sup>th</sup> Century arches resting on 15<sup>th</sup> Century piers.



The layout of the church throughout history

### History of the Church

Though we may never know their name, we do at least know that from the earliest church history in Cornwall, the gospel has been preached from this site by a holy man or woman and though the appearance of this site has varied much over the years, its core purpose has not.

It is likely that this church, along with many others in Cornwall, owes its location to the Celtic origin of Cornish Christianity. This is because, from the 6<sup>th</sup> century onwards, the Celtic church was centred around monasteries, from which a missionary would travel out and find a place to plant their cross. They would then mark out a "lan" ("Sacred enclosure" in Cornish) which could be on a pre-existing pagan site.

The missionary would then set up a wooden building to pray, preach and live in. Over the years this building would have been rebuilt and improved many times, until it finally reached what you see today.

Unfortunately, no evidence has as yet been found of any Celtic or Saxon building that originally occupied the site, however, it is hoped that as more restoration work is done to the church, it may become apparent how this church was founded.



### The 'Lady Well'

The Lady Well is a holy well that is strongly linked to St Stythian, a female Celtic hermit, who is also one of the best contenders for the patron saint of the church.

### The Dedication of the Church

Very little is known about the patron saint of this Church, even their name is in dispute. This is partly due to the fact that when the early Bishop's registers were being written, the scribes that wrote them had no common way of spelling names. Thus in various historical documents, the spelling ranges between Stethyana (Bishop Bronescombe's Register of 1268), Stedyan (Assize Rolls of 1301) and Stius Stidianus (Grandisson of 1338).

Who this name actually refers to has been a subject of some debate over the years, which has been worsened still by the fact that the range of names makes it impossible to even tell the gender of the saint. Suggestions range between St Stinian, a Welsh saint from the 6<sup>th</sup> century and St Swithun, a Wessex saint from the 9<sup>th</sup> century.

While the current name of the Church has finally settled on St Stythians, it was discovered that, when applying for a grant in 2013, that the church is listed under the name St Stediana, which it had to be called in order to claim the grant.



### Tapestries

The church has been very fortunate in having a talented band of tapestry workers enhancing the church with kneelers and an altar frontal. As shown below. The colourful banners on the walls were made by the Sunday School under the leadership of Lorna Hogan during the 1990's.

### Windows

The external masonry of all the windows has been renewed in polyphant stone (being stone that was quarried from Polyphant, a small village near Launceston).

Many of the windows are memorials. For instance, the chancel east window is a memorial to Dr. William Watson (died 1898), the baptistery west window is a memorial to Lieut. John Wright R.N. (died 1848), the east window of the south aisle, which is now hidden behind the organ, is a memorial to Thomas Reed (died 1812) and the east window in the north aisle is a memorial to James Martin (died 1812).



### Font

The cement-filled holes that can be seen on the top edge of the 15<sup>th</sup> Century font are from where the hinge and padlock were fixed. This was to stop people from stealing the holy water!





### The Churchyard

Depending upon which entrance you use (there are three) the first thing that you notice is likely to be the war memorial (above left), where the poppy wreaths are laid each year at the end of the remembrance day parade.

This entrance, along with the other main entrance, also retains the masonry bases of ancient lych-gates, which was where a dead body would first be rested when it was carried into the churchyard, so that the priest could carry out the first part of the service. They also both contain a central coffin-resting stone (above right).

The third entrance is spanned by a decorated 15<sup>th</sup> century arch, a similar arch can be found by the west entrance to the tower. This arch is reckoned to have been added to the south porch during the 15<sup>th</sup> century rebuilding of the church, then removed during the 18<sup>th</sup> century repairs.

One possible use for this arch was to add a little glamour to the Vicar's way into the churchyard, as the old Vicarage was opposite this entrance.

### Gravestones

The church contains many gravestones, ranging from the simple (below), to the magnificent (far below), ranging mostly from the late 1700's to the 1980's. However, due to limited space, most of the graves from the 1990's onwards are located in the second graveyard next to the cricket pitch. There are also a number of mural tablets inside the church.



### The Tower

For many years, the tower only contained four bells, a treble, two others and a tenor, all cast around the late 1700's. In 1930, 3 of the bells were sent to be recast and an alteration had to be made to the tenor bell. Thanks to the generosity of the late Mr. James Trewin of New Zealand, two more bells and a striking clock were added in 1950. *Regrettably, the clock currently does not work, as it was dis-*

**In 2012 major restoration of the Tower was commenced and was preceded by an overhaul of the bells and clock.**

**This was made possible by the generous donations of the grant funding bodies, fundraising, private donations and the work of the Bell Ringers who ring the bells each Sunday.**

### The Exterior of the Church

The initials J B (or possibly I B) are incised on one of the stones at the east end of the south aisle. These could be from James Buckingham, who was the vicar of the church from 1766 to 1797 and who instigated the repair work of 1783.