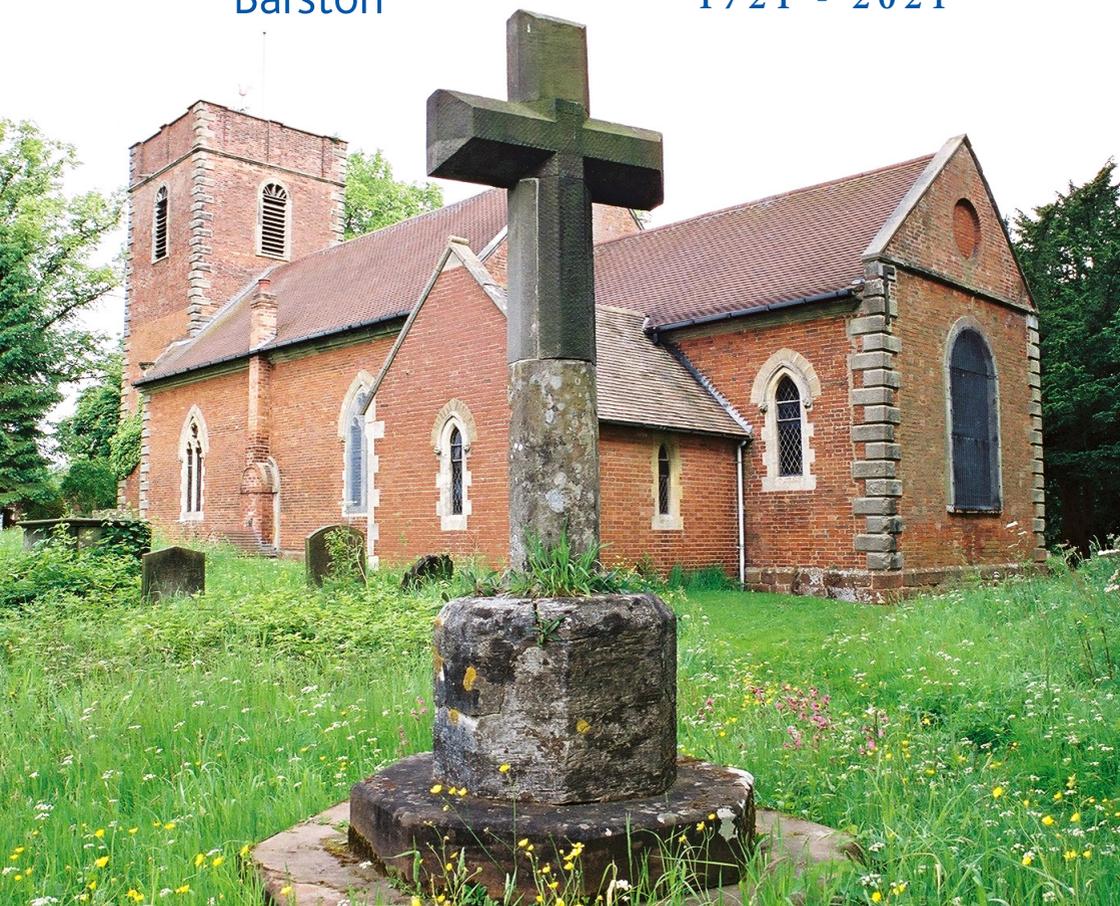


St.  
Swi<sup>+</sup>thin's  
Church  
Barston

300 Years  
Church Anniversary Edition  
1721 - 2021

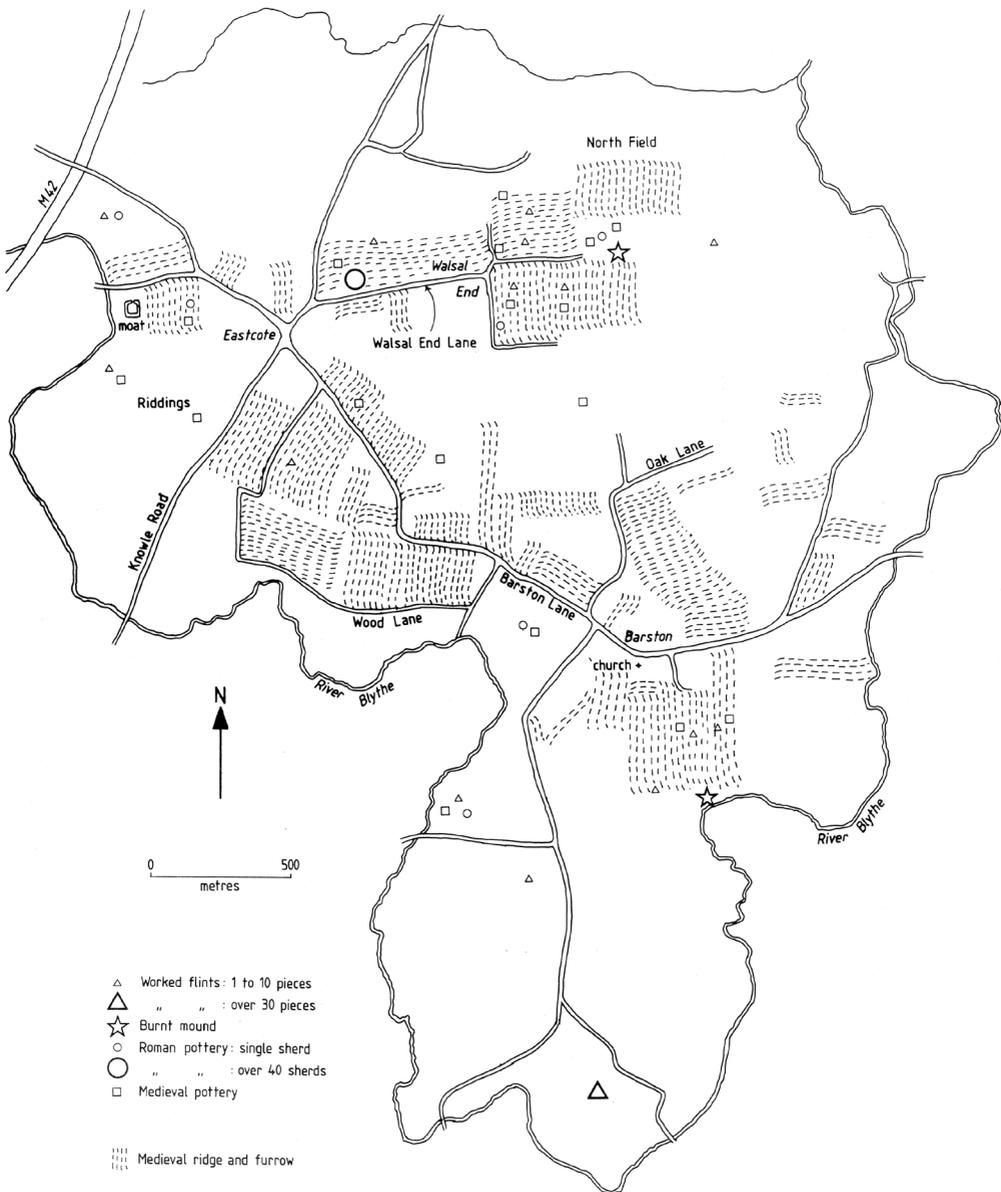


The History of  
St Swithin's Church  
Barston



THE CHURCH  
OF ENGLAND  
DIOCESE OF  
BIRMINGHAM

£2



- △ Worked flints: 1 to 10 pieces
- △ Worked flints: " " : over 30 pieces
- ☆ Burnt mound
- Roman pottery: single sherd
- Roman pottery: " " : over 40 sherds
- Medieval pottery
- |||| Medieval ridge and furrow

# Parish Church of St. Swithin Barston

*Present church built circa 1721-1727 on site of original church  
(going back to about the 11th Century)*

In Saxon times Barston, sometimes known as 'Bertanestone' or 'Bercestone' included almost all of Berkswell. In the reigns of Henry II and King John, portions were given to the Knights Templars and on their dissolution, to the Hospitallers. The foundations of the former, including alms-houses and the Temple can still be found in nearby Temple Balsall. A tradition suggests an underground passage from the Temple to our Church, but this would run beneath the River Blythe, as in ancient times the land formed part of the forest of Arden. This seems improbable as there would have been no difficulty in moving discreetly between the two places.



For many years the 'Chappell' dedicated to St Swythin belonged to the Church of Berkswell, who provided a Curate. The curate was licensed to Berkswell-cum-Barston.

The old 'Chappell' was burnt down in 1721 and the present church built. The following in Latin formed an inscription, now obliterated, above the West door:

*This Church, nearly destroyed, was rebuilt by the generous help of this County A.D. 1721. Thomas Fisher.*

The Fisher family. The oldest Church reference to which may be found inscribed

on the second highest pitched bell. 'Abraham Fisher Gave Mee William Bayley Made Mee 1691'. The memorial tablet in the south wall in the nave commemorates, among other people, 'John Gough Fisher second son of Thomas Fisher of Springfield in this County, Knight.'

The present building was Georgian before the Victorian 'restorers' got at it! Examples of the round-headed arches remain in the tower windows, in the south wall of the nave (the blocked off south door now housing the Charities Board) and in the east window. These arches, thought to be pagan in concept, offended the Victorians and similar ones elsewhere in the nave and

chancel, together with the chancel arch, were replaced by the present Neo-Gothic style. This work was carried out in 1897 at which time the gallery at the west end of the nave and a carved wooden chancel screen were removed and the vestry and north porch added. It is thought that the thickness of the walls is determined by those of the old Chapel now increased by the brickwork externally and plaster inside.

The Church has a peal of six bells. Five were restored and a sixth added in 1960. They are inscribed as follows:

1. John Taylor & Co., Founders, Loughborough, 1960. Peter Dawson, Vicar. George Clive Jackson & Percy Findon, Churchwardens.
2. Abraham Fisher Gave Mee William Bayley Made Mee 1691.
3. Matthew Bayley and William Bayley Made Mee 1689.
4. No inscription... In 1963 it was suggested that it is reputed to be of the 14th Century.
5. Mr. Robert Boyse Minester 1728 (Made by Joseph Smith).
6. William Shagthwall and John Eaton C W Matthew Bayley Made Mee 1683.

The 1963 Order of Service booklet mentions the following bellringing customs in former days in Barston:

- i) The chiming of the bells for Sunday services, preceded by a Sermon Bell, and followed by another for the last five minutes; also a bell rung at 8am. Until 1894 a bell was rung after Morning Service known as the Pudding Bell.
- ii) The bells were rung on Principal Festivals and on New Year's Eve, also for Weddings on payment of a fee. On November 5th in the evening (but at one time 5am, the ringers receiving 5 shillings from the Churchwardens).
- iii) The Death Knell was sounded within 12 hours after death; each bell tolled three times for a male; twice for a female; and the age was given on the tenor.



**I**n September 2009 the Bell Tower was completely refurbished. This involved the installation of a new sink and draining board, together with shelving and a drop leaf table along the South Wall. This work followed on from the complete repainting of the Church, Bell Tower and Belfry.

Plans and elevations of the pulpit and prayer desk dated 1854 were acquired in entrepreneurial manner by a London gallery who offered them to the 1933 incumbent for 30 shillings. His reply is amusing...

*“Dear Sir,  
I am in receipt of the Original Drawings relating to Barston Church. They are of no use to us, or I should think to anyone, and certainly not worth 30 shillings. I might give a couple of shillings for them, and I should not think anyone is likely to give you as much. If you wish me to return them, kindly send me sixpence for the postage.  
Yours faithfully, J. Barker”.*

The drawings remain in the Church's possession to this day. One wonders if he had a reply. A note in the Warwick records shows these furnishings to have been erected on 2nd March 1854; carved by Rattee of Cambridge, the other work by Kendrick Builders of Birmingham.

It is also noted that the present font was installed, made from a design by Dudley Male of Birmingham and that the old font in two portions was buried under the foundation stone of the new one, the date of this being 18th August 1854.

The first mention of music in Barston records appears on 5th November 1821 – ‘for repairing the Bassoon £2.2.0.’ This indicates that there was a Church Band and an entry for 31st December 1840 notes ‘for fiddle strings 5 shillings’. It seems likely that the band was housed in the now demolished gallery at the back of the nave. On 24th February 1865 the Church was presented with a harmonium by a Mrs Bennett and on 27th February 1867 books were bought for the choir. The present pipe organ was installed on 25th November 1903 by the firm of William Hill & Sons, who built Birmingham Town Hall organ. The electronic blower was added in 1947 and although the instrument is small, it is commended by the knowledgeable.





The Church has been scheduled under the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act as being of architectural or historical interest. L. F. Salzman in his History of Warwickshire implies that the twisted balusters of the communion rail are ancient but does not attempt to date them. Suggestions have been made that they are Jacobean, though it seems improbable that they ante-date the fire of 1721.

In recent times a bier of some antiquity and no longer used was returned to the Langton family, as it was originally provided by them, to enable the coffin to be carried from the road to the Church more easily.

Over the years there have been many charitable bequests made principally toward the relief of the needy in Barston. It is a reflection of our times that the Trustees find it increasingly difficult to establish a need requiring help. A list detailing the charities is displayed on the board facing the entrance on the blocked off south door arch. A scheme for the regulation of the charities was drawn up on 27th November 1972 by the Charity Commissioners and they have been rationalised into the Barston Relief in Need Charity and the Joseph Guest Charity for the assistance of poor boys and girls resident in the parish.

The stained glass of the east window dates from 1863 and almost certainly saved that window from the Victorian renovators. This was removed and professionally cleaned in 2008.

In 1970, a stained glass window was added to the north side of the nave in memory of Frederick Gillman, a local farmer who died suddenly at the age of 34. Depicting the impact of the changing seasons on agricultural life, it was designed and made by Nora Yoxall and Elsie Whitford. Then in the year 2000 another window was commissioned for the south side of the church to celebrate the new Millennium, funded by members of the parish and congregation, and designed and created by The Art of Glass of Earlswood. This window, which beautifully complements the one opposite shows various scenes and features of life in Barston at the turn of the century and aptly incorporates the biblical text 'Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today and for ever' (Hebrews 13:8).



During 1988 agreement was reached by the PCC to allow three church pews to be removed from either side of the front of the nave of the Church. The purpose was to provide room for a keyboard to be positioned, and also for performance and acting during Services.

Hatchments became popular during the 17th century in England amongst the nobility, who used them to display their coats of arms at the time of bereavement. These lozenge shaped wooden boards were hung outside the family home to signify a death in the family, thus notifying the neighbourhood of their loss. After a week or two the hatchment would be taken to the local church to be displayed there. On the whole, this was a short-lived tradition, though, some hatchments dating as late as the 1940s do exist. The term hatchment is a corruption of the word 'achievement' or armorial shield.

The design of a hatchment can tell us a number of things:

- i) A hatchment where the left-hand side is black and the right hand-side white shows that the notable was male, married and died before his wife.
- ii) If this is reversed so that the black is on the right-hand side and the white on the left, this tells us that the notable was female, married and died before her husband.
- iii) A hatchment with an all black background and a single coat of arms was for spinsters or bachelors.

The ones on view in the Church on the south wall, were restored in 2003, and are of the Fisher family.

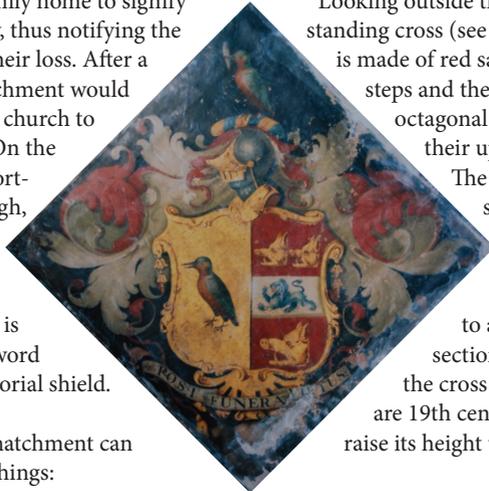
Registers of baptisms, marriages and burials dating from 1598 are held in the Record office at Warwick and an index of all the Warwick records relating to the parish are retained in Church and may be seen on application to the Minister.

Nearly three centuries have witnessed Christian worship within its walls and our prayer is that it will long continue as a centre for the praise of God and the teaching of the Gospel.

Looking outside the Church, the standing cross (see cover) in Barston is made of red sandstone. The two steps and the socket stone are octagonal and chamfered on their upper outside edge. The squared end of the shaft is mortised into the socket and the shaft rises through chamfered corners to a tapering octagonal section. The remainder of the cross shaft and the head are 19th century additions which raise its height to 2 metres.

In conservation terms, it is listed Grade II. It is scheduled National Monument number 30025. 'Scheduling' refers to the legal system for protecting and conserving nationally important archaeological sites in the U.K. English Heritage takes a leading role in identifying sites in England for designation by the Secretary of State for The Department for Culture, Media and Sport - (used to be The Department of National Heritage).

The original list of protected monuments was set out in a schedule attached to the first Act of Parliament in 1882 and so the standing cross at Barston has been duly 'scheduled' - long may it stand!



## Barston War Memorial

### World War 1

Barston's fallen from WW1 are commemorated in both the Memorial Institute and St Swithin's. In the Institute all 52 men who served are listed on a large sign-written board, and in the Church the fallen are commemorated on a brass plaque along with the fallen from WW2. Barston lost 11 of its sons in the first world war. Five of the men, the Prentice and the Hall brothers, were cousins.

### Francis Hall 1898-1917

Francis worked as a farm labourer at Walsall End, Barston, and when he was conscripted he was a Driver in the Royal Field Artillery. After being gassed he was repatriated to England but died from the effects of the gas on 23rd February 1917 at Farnham Hill Military Hospital, Farnham, Surrey. He is buried at St Swithin's Barston.

### Reginald Hall 1893-1919

Reginald was a farmer and served with 70th Brigade Royal Artillery and died on 12th February 1919 aged 26. He is reburied in the Tournai communal cemetery Allied Extension, Belgium. He was awarded the Victory and British medals.

### Arthur Johnson 1891-1916

Arthur served in the Mercantile Navy and in 1916 he was on the cargo vessel SS Serbistan which went missing at sea. He has no record of any war medals but is included in the war memorial at St Swithin's church, showing that the villagers regarded him as a war casualty.

### William Job Mason 1893-1916

Job was a regular soldier and served in the Coldstream Guards. He died on 22nd September 1916 and is buried at the Abbeville Communal Cemetery extension. He was 23 years old and was awarded the Victory and the British medals along with the 14 star.



### Harry Prentice 1878-1918

Harry lived in Church cottage Barston. He served in the Queens Royal West Surrey regiment and died on 23rd March 1918 aged 40. He is remembered at the Arras Memorial, Pas de Calais, France and was awarded the Victory and British medals.

### James Prentice 1898-1918

James served in Flanders with the 1st Battalion Wiltshire Regiment and later transferred to the Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry. He was killed on 12th April 1918 and was awarded the Victory and British medals. He was 20 years old and is commemorated at the Ploegsteert Memorial, Hainaut, Belgium.

### Arthur Prentice 1895-1918

Arthur worked as a plough boy and was cousin to Harry and James Prentice. He served in the Gloucester regiment and died on 24th April 1918 aged 23. He is buried at the Hangard Communal Cemetery Extension in the Somme, France and was awarded the Victory and British medals.

### **George Samuel 1882-1918**

George enlisted in 1915 and reached the rank of Captain Major with the Royal Field Artillery. He was awarded the 15 star with the Victory and British medals. George was killed on 15th August 1918 aged 37 and is buried at the Etretat Churchyard Extension, Seine-Maritime, France.

### **John Simpson 1897-1918**

John was born at Berkswell and worked as a farm labourer before his call up. He was serving at Salonika in Greece with the Worcester Regiment when he was killed on 25th September 1918, aged 22. He is commemorated at the Doiran Memorial, Northern Greece and was awarded the British and Victory medals.

### **Frederick Wilsdon 1884-1916**

Frederick was the first man from Barston to die in the great war. He worked as a house painter before the war and served with the Royal Warwickshire regiment. He was killed on 3rd September 1916 and is commemorated at the Thiepval Memorial on the Somme in France. He was awarded the Victory and the British medals and was 32 years old.

### **World War 2**

During WW2 Barston lost just one of its sons. **Denis George Ambrose 1920-1941** lived with his parents at The Limes, Barston Lane and was a Navigator in the Royal Air Force. He was killed on a bombing raid on 3rd June 1941. His grave can be found in the Churchyard of St Swithin's.



*Denis Ambrose*



*Francis Hall*



*Francis Hall*



*Arthur Prentice (seated)*



*William & Percy Mason*



*Harry Prentice*



*James Prentice*

# St Swithin's Churchyard, Barston

*In the autumn of 2013 we were informed that the Churchyard had qualified as a Local Wildlife Site*

Local Wildlife Sites represent the most important wildlife sites outside Sites of Special Scientific Interest, and are selected against agreed criteria. Their contribution is very critical, if we are to maintain a landscape rich in wildlife.

The site stands on the top of a low ridge, on an outcrop of acidic kemper sandstone, the church stands on an ancient site dating back to the XI<sup>th</sup> century although the present building was erected during 1721 – 1727 following the destruction of the old church by fire.



The most valuable habitat within the churchyard are the extensive areas of semi improved neutral grassland which is left uncut during the summer. The grassland sward is dominated by sweet vernal grass, Yorkshire fog and smooth meadow grass with a locally abundant crested dogstail. Forbs are relatively abundant particularly fox and cub, meadow vetchling, lesser trefoil and germander speedwell, yarrow, pigmint, oxeye daisy, red clover and many other species. Occasional species include lady's smock, spiked sedge, musk mallow, cowslip, slender speedwell and tufted vetch.

Barston Church meadows qualifies as a local wildlife site, with ten scientific and eighteen community criteria. It is the centre of the community, and used as an open space by the residents.

The whole area must continue to be sensitively managed, otherwise the present diversity will be lost including several rare species.



## **Additional dates from the past**

**1721-27** St Swithin's Church, Barston Church rebuilt.

**1897** The Low ceiling was removed, and beams displayed. The gallery at the West End was also removed. The windows shaped originally like the ones in the tower were reshaped and the vestry and the North Porch were added.

**1902** A Lamp was placed over the Church Gate.

**1903** The Organ, a beautiful little instrument built by William Hill & Sons of London, was bought by public subscription.

**1916** Alms Dish purchased by Ladies' Sewing Party.

**1917** A beautiful pair of brass candlesticks for the Altar were presented by S.S. Guest, Esq.

**1918** The Churchwardens Wands were given by Mr Joseph Ward.

**1921** A piece of ground between the Churchyard and Road was added to the Churchyard and Consecrated, and at the same time the War Memorial Tablet and Font Ewer (in memory of Mr Guest) were dedicated.

**1925** The roof was retiled at a cost of £200 and again in 1989 but not at the same price.

**1931** The walls were painted and electric light was installed. The Pulpit lights added later, were the gift of Mr W.A. Ledbrooke and Mrs Woolley in memory of their father and mother.

**1933** New drain made from stoke hole.

**1935** A framed copy of the Churchyard Plans was gifted by Mr P. Findon.

**1936** Oak panelling, the gift of Mrs Guest in memory of her son, Peter Elliot Guest, was put on the East Wall. Additional heating apparatus (radiators and overhead pipes) were installed.

**1938** Clock face painted.

**1940** Martyrs Memorial Trust replaced by CPAS

**1960** The current Lectern was given to the Church in memory of George Clive Jackson Churchwarden.

**1980** New Loudspeakers installed

**1982** New electrical system installed.

**1987** Church completely rewired.

- 1988** The three front pews were removed.
- 1989** Roof replaced including all Timbers.
- 1990** Work on Quoins and Stonework  
St Swithins House Conference Centre officially opened, in what was the previous Vicarage.
- 1992** Boiler replaced.
- 2000** Millennium Bibles distributed to all children and young people in the village of Barston.  
Work on stonework in Tower.  
New speaker system installed.  
New Millennium Window installed by Art of Glass.
- 2001** Planting of the Millennium Yew in the Churchyard, presented by the Conservation Foundation.
- 2007** The Parish Magazine ceased publication, and was replaced by the Barston Chronicle, followed by a name change to the Barston News Sheet, and produced by the Parish Council.
- 2011** The replacement of the Boiler by H.V. Jones & Co and the fuel line beneath the path. The paths were relayed in brick by Abbey Driveways, and the old Hawthorn and Holly Hedge by the road was replaced.  
The new Church Signs supplied by Deeley's were installed in two locations during September, followed by the replacement of the wooden louvres in the Church Bell Tower.  
Central Theatre Supplies installed in the church a new Sound system in the same year, together with a Projector and Screen. The latter was needed to fulfil the need for the showing of media during Services.
- 2013** The Church Clock was gilded, and the timing mechanism was brought up to date becoming automated. This was mainly brought about by many generous donations from Villagers.
- 2020** Removal of two pews to the right of the Church door entrance to facilitate the location of wheel chairs and push chairs.  
Church closed in March due to lockdown, following the Covid 19 Pandemic, by order of H.M. Government. Restricted services under Government guidelines recommenced in August.



*LECTERN – given in Memory of George Clive Jackson, Churchwarden 1893-1960*

## Definitions

### **Aisle**

From the Latin ‘ala’ and the Old French ‘ail’, sometimes written Isle, Yle, and Alley.

### **Nave**

The name is derived from the Latin ‘navis’, a ship, possibly with some reference to the ‘ship of St. Peter’ or the Ark of Noah.

### **The Chancel**

Originally called ‘cancelli’, from which the name is derived.

### **Prayer Desk**

Also called a ‘prie-dieu’, a prayer desk is a kneeler with a small shelf for books. The Prayer desk is usually used by the Minister(s).

### **The Pulpit**

An English word, from Old French, from Late Latin pulpitum, from Latin, wooden platform.

### **The Lectern**

The place we read from the bible, is an English word: lettorne, lectorn, from Old French lettrun, from Medieval Latin lectrinum, from Late Latin lectrum, from Latin lectus, past participle of legere, to read.

### **Pews**

From the English word pewe, probably from Old French puie, balcony, from Latin podia, plural of podium, balcony.

### **Font (basin)**

The place where people are baptised. The water is never tipped down the drain because it has been set apart (sanctified) for a special purpose. After the Baptism the water should be returned to the ground. Font is from Old English, from Late Latin fons, font- from Latin, fountain.

## Ministers of St Swithin's

1917-40	John Barker	1976-79	Keith Charles Comber
1940-43	William Leatham	1979-85	Interregnum
1944-50	George R. Mortimer	1985-95	Alan Victor Golton
1950	A.L. Palmer	1995-04	Eric Watson Russell
1951-57	Frank Hines	2005-12	Roger Turner
1957-58	Ronald Arthur Smith	2013-14	Stephen Thomas Mayes
1959-63	Peter Dawson	2015-17	Duncan Ballard
1964-72	Brian James Bert Easter	2017-present	Stuart Dimes
1972-76	Richard Hacking		



*St Swithin's Church, Barston. Reference: Victorian County History (VCH), Vol 4, 1947*

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