

Trips out with a religious connection

Holy Cross, Bobbington



The church of Holy Cross is set back from the road in the village of Bobbington, which is 5 miles west of Wombourne on the way to Six Ashes.

The church I chose to visit this time is (unlike some I've covered!) within very easy reach of Sedgley and would only take a couple of hours at most to get to and look around.

I'd noted the church of Holy Cross in Bobbington, South Staffordshire on several occasions while en route from Wombourne to Six Ashes but never stopped to investigate. I picked a delightful day in May 2017, with a bright blue sky - the external pictures show it off to best advantage.



The nave and chancel at Holy Cross, Bobbington. Architectural evidence shows that there was a church on the present site in Bobbington by the 12th century.

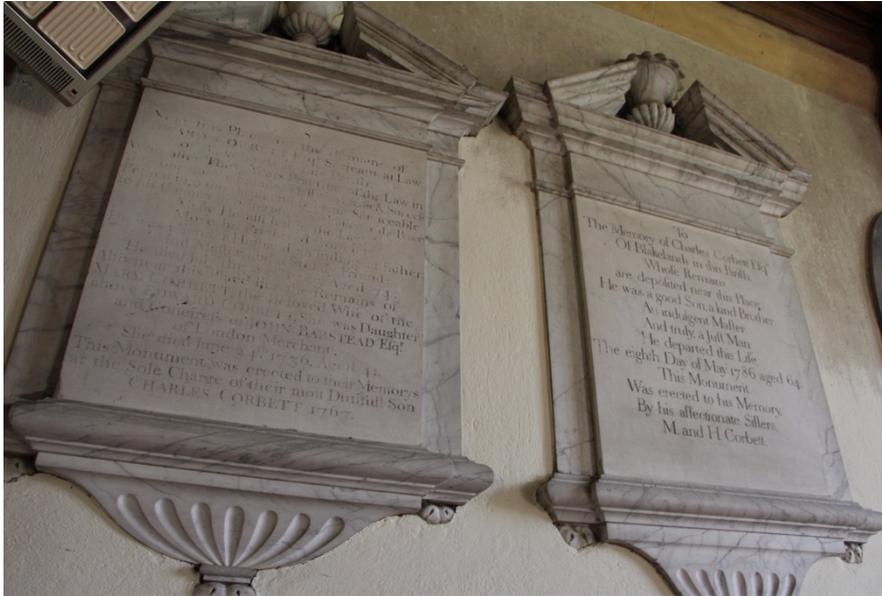


The beautiful altar at Holy Cross, Bobbington.

The building originated as a dependent chapel of Claverley, and remained a dependency until the Reformation. The parish was in the diocese of Lichfield as part of Bridgnorth 'peculiar' until 1846, when it was transferred with Bridgnorth to Hereford diocese, returning to Lichfield diocese in 1905. Invocations to both St. Nicholas and St. Mary have been noted in past centuries, and Holy Cross was used consistently only from the late 1880s.



The font at Holy Cross, just by the south door. The font is an example of 14th century craftsmanship, although a modern wastepipe and plug have been added.



The church has memorials to the Corbett family of nearby Blakelands in the choir. Three memorials on the wall of the chancel commemorate them.

The Corbett family played an important part in the life of the village. In 1638 Roger Corbett owned the farmhouse; a plaque of horseshoe nails dates the family connection.

In 1700 Edward Corbett, son of Roger, married Mary and the house was extended from a cottage to a square, adding the Main Hall. Edward is recorded on the memorial as a lawyer, practicing in the courts of Westminster Hall in London.

Beside Edward and Mary's memorial is a plaque to their son Charles, who also lived at Blakelands.

Corbett School is the local church of England school. It was founded in 1792 by Hannah and Mary Corbett, unmarried sisters of Charles, who also lived at Blakelands. A stone plaque from the original school building can be found within the School, which states the initial purpose of the School: 'Founded and Erected for the Education of 20 Poor Boys and 12 Poor Girls by M and H Corbett 1792.' Mary and Hannah also have a memorial in the choir, by their brother's and parents' plaques.



In the South Porch is the 13th century effigy of a civilian, which is thought to be of Philip Fitz-Helgot who died in 1213, a grandson of Lord Helgot who held the Manor of Bobbington in the Domesday survey.

I was informed by parishioners that a later connection to the Corbett name is with John Corbett, 'The Salt King', who endowed Corbett Hospital in Amblecote Stourbridge, although I didn't identify a memorial to him and it's not clear whether he was of the same family as the Corbetts commemorated in the Choir. He spent his youth living at the Delph, and made his fortune producing salt at Stoke Prior, Worcestershire and, perhaps remembering his youth, purchased the rather rundown house, The Hill, in December 1891. He repaired and refurbished the house, changing its use into a hospital and endowed it to the local people on 31 July 1893, with a sum of £2,000 for endowment (since increased by public subscription to £5,000) and two sums of £500 towards the repairs fund and furnishing. John Corbett never lived at The Hill.



The impressive pre-Reformation wooden chest, hewn out of a solid oak trunk and bound with iron, has two compartments; a bar on one lid overlaps and locks the other.



A tablet in the aisle notes the death in 1972 of Prince William of Gloucester and Lt. Commander Vyrell in an air crash; a wrought iron flower stand in the nave was given by H.R.H. Princess Alice in memory of her son.

A royal tragedy is commemorated in the aisle of the church. A licensed pilot and President of the British Light Aviation Centre Prince William of Gloucester owned several aircraft and competed in amateur air show races. In August 1972, he was competing in the Goodyear International Air Trophy at Halfpenny Green with Vyrell Mitchell—a pilot with whom the prince had often raced—listed as a passenger. Shortly after their takeoff and at a very low altitude, the Piper Cherokee banked abruptly to port, with an extreme increase in the rate of turn and corresponding loss of altitude; the wing hit a tree and sheared off, and the out-of-control plane flipped over and crashed into an earthen bank, bursting into flames. Prince William and Mitchell were killed. The crash happened before 30,000 spectators, the fire took two hours to control, and the bodies were identified at inquest the next day from dental records.

He shared a close relationship with Charles, Prince of Wales, his seven-years-younger first cousin once removed. The Prince of Wales named his first son, Prince William, born in 1982, after him.



Also commemorated in the aisle are members of the Moseley family of Leaton Hall, Bobbington. William Moseley, who died in 1869, is recorded as Lord of the Manor. The hall has now been converted to flats.



The tower and bell ringing gantry at Holy Cross Bobbington. Nowadays the bells are operated by an electronic carillon.



Outside, the stone coffin by the footpath was found under the church floor, and is thought to be 12th century.



Beyond the churchyard lie acres of pleasant farmland.



Blakelands, the farm in Bobbington where the Corbett family once lived, is now a venue for wedding receptions, and a restaurant.

Written by Martin Jones

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Based on reference information

Bobbington History Group: <http://www.bobbington-village.co.uk/history.htm>

Corbett Hospital - Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Corbett_Hospital

John Corbett (industrialist) - Wikipedia: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Corbett_\(industrialist\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Corbett_(industrialist))

Corrections and additions are welcome – send to:
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