

A Brief Guide to
the church of
SAINT LAURENCE, STROUD



within the Benefice of
St Lawrence and All Saints, Uplands with Holy Trinity, Slad,
and in the Diocese of Gloucester

30p – please put the money in the wall safe next to the main entrance.

Historical background

In medieval times, a church was built on this site as a chapel of ease to the mother church of St Mary's, Bisley.

By the 14th century, Stroud had grown to the extent that it could have its own priest.

In the 19th century, it was felt that the church was not large enough for the congregations of the day and so in 1866 the whole church – with the exception of the tower and spire – was pulled down and the new building was consecrated and re-opened for worship in 1868.

Therefore what one sees on entering the church is essentially the Victorian structure.

On the wall in the south aisle are some pictures of the "old" church.

There are also some items that were saved from that church, mainly in the form of memorial tablets. They were placed on the west wall of the nave and in the ringing chamber in the tower. One of the tablets by the door into the tower commemorates the Fisher family, including Paul Hawkins Fisher who wrote, in the 19th century, a very full and informative history of Stroud entitled *Notes and Recollections of Stroud*.

The most striking monument rescued from the old church is now in the south transept. It shows Thomas Stephens of Lypiatt in his lawyers robes. He was attorney general to both Henry and Charles Stuart. Charles later became King Charles II.

The church contains a number of features donated in memory of members of the Stanton family who were prominent citizens in a number of fields including cloth manufacture and politics, some representing Stroud in Parliament. The magnificent wooden screen between the nave and the choir was donated in 1912 by the Stanton family, and the cross above it was added in 1914 in memory of Father Arthur Stanton who served the very poor parish of St Alban's in Holborn, London for 50 years.

St Laurence

St Laurence is normally represented by a gridiron which recalls his martyrdom by being burnt on such a grid. The picture on the front of this guidebook is of the banner which is displayed in the church.

Another representation of the gridiron is on the front of the nave altar.

Three small sections at the top of the window in the south transept show scenes from Laurence's life.

His "crime", which really upset the prefect of Rome in 258, was to present the poor and sick as the "Church's treasures" when he had been ordered to hand over its valuables.

Fire

In 2005, the church suffered the attentions of an arsonist who started fires in three places around the church and generally wreaked havoc.

A few small reminders of the incident remain.

The nave altar is a replacement for the one that was severely damaged in the fire. However, the grid on the front incorporates some of the wood from the old altar. Scorch marks are still visible.

The curtain behind the altar in the Lady Chapel was reluctant to burn, but one corner of it bears witness to the attempt to set it alight.

One of the wings of the lectern eagle is a little crumpled as a result of its being tipped over onto the tiles.

Bells

The church has a ring of 10 bells.

Organ

The organ was built by Norman and Beard in 1906.

Windows

All the coloured glass in the windows date from the late 19th or the early 20th centuries. Details of dates and manufacturers, as far as they can be established, are in the book for *Welcomers and Visitors* at the back of the church.

Churchyard

In the southwest corner of the churchyard is the grave of Lieutenant Joseph Delmont who died (1807) of wounds received in what was locally believed to be the last duel in England. His opponent was Lieutenant Benjamin Heazle. However, there are records of duels in 1845 and 1852.

Closer to the church is the tomb of John Hollings resembling a stepped pyramid. In an argument, his adversary declared he would live to see Hollings buried, to which the retort was "Never!" However, Hollings took the precaution of decreeing that, when his time came (1805), his coffin should not be interred but left on the surface and covered by the monument that we see.

In another part of the churchyard is a plaque to Richard Merrett, watch and clock maker, who died in 1767 "under inoculation". It is tempting to think that he was a patient of Edward Jenner, but Jenner did not embark on his experiments to find a cure for small pox until the 1790s.