

INTRODUCTION TO ST MICHAEL AND ALL ANGELS CHURCH, MIDDLEWICH

There has been a Christian church on this site from at least the late 12th Century. Official records state that the first Parson was 'Warin' in 1207.

Mainly Perpendicular in style – 1377 – 1546 -, the fabric consists of a nave and chancel, both with side aisles, and a late fifteenth century tower situated at the west end of the north aisle.

First built in the middle of the twelfth century, the church was rebuilt two centuries later, and the present building conforms to the fourteenth century plan. The nave arcade consists of four arches on each side, springing from octagonal piers with fine carved light capitals.

All that remains of the original work are the two eastern responds and the supporting round piers set on heavy bases. This masonry shows the Norman influence still very strongly predominating from the transitional period to the Early English style.

On the round piers of the narrow bay (on both sides) are inserted, on either side of the nave, single carved brackets in the form of a head. These supported the Rood loft over the Chancel screen, which was in front of the Chancel. Roods were removed in the reign of Edward VI (1547-53), and Elizabeth 1 gave instructions for all lofts to be removed.

There is every reason to assume from fragments of sculpture which have been found during the reparations of the church that a Norman church existed on this site.

The nave clerestory was added in the fifteenth century, at the time when many new windows were inserted in the church. Also at this time, a Lady Chapel was

built at the east end of the south aisle. In the following century the Barons/Kinderton Chapel was built.

The Tower is a good example of Perpendicular work and had battlements and pinnacles added at a later restoration. Of especial note are the windows and the chancel arch which are all excellently made.

From the beginning of the 18th century until 1857, the interior of the church was plastered and whitewashed, including the carved oak beams to both the nave and the north and south Aisles. Galleries were erected all around the walls and there was a two-tier gallery under what is now the west window. This raised gallery was to accommodate the singers (who came from the nearby village of Davenham) and musicians, consisting of a violin, flute, drum and horn.

There are many excellent examples of church artefacts and furniture, and tales of the development of church practices, which can be found within the contents of the tour of the church.

The plan to enable closer access will, hopefully, match the best method for the whole range of visitors to the church. Whatever method you use, please let us know your thoughts on it, and offer any suggestions for improvements which you feel we can look at.

Enjoy your time here with us. We hope you will find it both interesting and rewarding.

The Heritage Team.