

Medieval Church Furnishings With Tim Bridges - 10 **February 2001**

Tim illustrated his talk with numerous slides of medieval church furniture, mostly featuring fairly local churches. We'd visited several of them already, thanks to Ralph, but after such a talk I always feel the need to revisit these places with fresh interest!

Medieval churches were quite bare in terms of what we think of as furniture, but compensated by having colourful paintings. In St Peter's Church Martley the walls are brightly painted. Strensham Church features a row of painted panels depicting Christ, archbishops and saints.

There were also beautifully carved wood rood screens, like the one on the next page*, which separated the nave from the chancel. Sadly not many of these escaped the ravages of the Reformation and the Puritans.

Tim showed us fonts, with a good example in the adjacent church at Inkberrow. A stoup was a stone bowl containing holy water placed near the door of the church. Worshippers dipped into it to make the sign of the cross as they entered.

An aumbry was a built-in wall cupboard by the altar, providing secure storage for sacred objects, though it's rare to find one now with its original doors. Also for storage were magnificent carved wooden chests, for holding church documents and treasures. The three keys for the different locks would be kept by three different people.

Stone was carved and used for numerous decorations. Just one example are the carved shapes of a rabbit and a pig in the porch at Elmley Castle Church.

Other features to look out for include chantry chapels, misericords, Easter sepulchres, piscinas, sedilia, tombs and triptychs, like the one at Besford.

Medieval tiles are colourful and decorate the altar steps at Bredon, the floor at Strensham, and a wall behind the altar at Great Malvern Priory.

I know I've only skimmed the surface of what Tim told us in his fascinating talk. I was too busy watching to take notes, and hoped someone else would produce a write-up!

Thanks Tim for a very interesting afternoon.

Don't forget Tim Bridges book "Churches of Worcestershire", priced £12.95. There's a copy in our branch library.

*Not included in this .pdf document, only available in the magazine