



The Sezincote Chapel (top) with the recently added glass screen. A scallop shell engraved into the glass (bottom). Scallops are the traditional emblem of St. James.



The octagonal font, dating from the 14th century, by the entrance door. Baptisms of local children are still conducted regularly at the morning services.



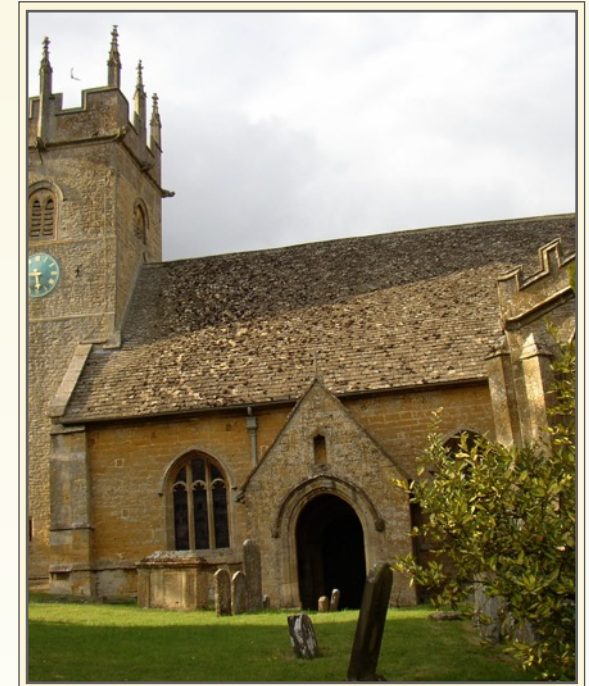
One of two stained glass windows on the south side of the nave, made by Ward and Hughes, this one depicts Christ's Blessing of the Children.

St. James's Church today

Today St. James's Church still stands at the centre of the village community. Services take place every Sunday at 9:30 am, other than the third Sunday when Messy Church meets in the Village Hall at 4 pm. There are close links with the local church school, which often uses the building for school services. There is a very active Friends of St. James's raising money for the upkeep of the building. There is a small but lively group meeting weekly for Bible study and prayer. Please join us at a service if you can. For more information contact one of the church wardens.

ST. JAMES'S

LANGBOROUGH



ST. JAMES'S CHURCH

There has been a visible Christian witness in Longborough since the late 12th century, and the oldest part of the present church building dates back to the 13th. This leaflet aims to point out the major items of interest, and introduce you to the church of today.

Longborough Church and Village



Leigh Aisle and Memorial

The monument to Sir William Leigh, and his wife Elizabeth is particularly poignant. It consists of an effigy of the two of them, whilst a daughter, who predeceased them rests her head upon a skull, and a little baby lies at the mother's feet. Two daughters and two sons appear in bass relief on the tomb chest below.

The first settlers arrived in the hills above Longborough 5,000 years ago, and built the Long Barrow after which the village takes its name. Human bones have been found in a quarry nearby, as well as bones of large prehistoric animals.

There was a Romano-British village within the parish to the east of the Fosseyway. At the time of the Domesday Book there were three manors in Longborough, the largest of which belonged to the King. They later passed to the powerful Mortimer family.

In 1256 two of the original manors were given to Richard, Earl of Cornwall and King of the Romans. Richard's son, Edmund, gave the land to Hailes Abbey, who threatened to dispossess the villagers in favour of sheep.

Monks from the Abbey served in the parish until 1539, although they were not noted for their loving treatment of their parishioners! From that time the village and church became the responsibility of the Leigh family until relatively recently.

The first church that we know of dates back to the 12th century, when a priest was murdered in the building. At that stage it consisted of a simple nave and chancel, of which the chancel arch remains to this day. Over the centuries different parts were added to the church – the west tower and south porch in the 13th century, the south transept, now known as the Leigh Aisle in the 14th, the nave windows in the 15th, the turret clock in the 17th, the north transept in the 19th.

In recent years many other features have been added or restored. The six bells (referred to by John Betjeman in "Summoned by Bells") had been declared unsafe, but a generous grant from the Cyril Kleinwort Charitable Trust in 1987 brought them back into use. The church was re-roofed in 1981, the Sezincote Chapel refurbished in 1998/9, the organ overhauled in 2002, a new toilet added in 2005, and a new glass screen erected in front of the Sezincote Chapel in 2008. In addition the historic clock in the Sezincote Chapel has now been restored.

The church building is notable for the personal nature of the tombs and inscriptions found inside. Besides the Leigh Memorial (see opposite) another headstone of Henry Baker, who died aged two, reads pathetically: "I, dying young, was quite forgot; But God a friend did raise me up To write a line or to for me, Who died in my infancy."

For others death came as a blessed relief, as in this inscription to Katherine Rowsham who died at 28. "A happy change of Heaven that set me free From this base world and all its misery Fare well dear husband and my babes of love, Till we shall meet in endless bliss above."

The inscriptions may be sad, but the church itself is bright, cheerful and lovingly kept. Recent alterations to the Sezincote Chapel, with the addition of a glass screen, have made it more adaptable, whilst retaining its beauty. And the church still occupies an important place in the affections of the community.