

The church register dates from 1728.

The church until 1893 consisted of the tower, nave and chancel. It is built of rough-dressed local heathstone and had, since its last restoration, a stone roof. This in turn was replaced recently by tiles. The porch had a small building adjoining in which domestic rather than ecclesiastic windows suggest that this might have been used for lay purposes, probably vestry meetings. Another unusual feature was a twenty-paned dormer window to give light to the organ in the gallery, let into the nave next to the tower. There was also a skylight at the chancel end.

The Norman tower is in three stages and is surmounted by a (later) crenelated parapet. The parapet bears the grooves supposed to have been scored by ropes used to hoist kegs and bales of contraband to the top of the tower which was used as a temporary hiding place. It would also have made a useful lookout. There is a doorway, no longer used, in the north side of the tower and a small lancet-shaped window (splayed inside). Both would have proved useful when the tower was used as a schoolroom. The main entrance is now in the nave on the south side.

In earlier times there were six bells (some report seven) but all but one were sold in 1797 to a Bristol church for £143 9s. 4d. less £9 5s. 6d. carriage. One of the bells, a treble, had been cast at Shaston (Shaftesbury) in 1751 at the cost of £13 8s. 2d. and carried to Kinson for twelve shillings. The money from the bells was needed to improve the church and this was done at the cost of £27 2s. 3d. by Joseph Puce, who put up a new gallery and replaced a beam. A new organ was installed at about this time. Before the sale of the bells sixpence was allowed in the church accounts for beer for the bellringers, and in 1812 the bells were rung to celebrate the occasion of the taking of the Dutch fleet; presumably the bells had been replaced by this time. The clock was placed in the tower in 1904 in memory of Queen Victoria. In the east of the churchyard, by the gate, was a sundial.

The copper face had the date 1675 engraved on it, a sun with classic features and the legend 'Time is Short'. It had been remounted but has since been defaced and removed.

The flowerbeds in the churchyard were kept stocked for many years by Mr. Keevil who retired to Kinson. Nearly all the stones remain in their original positions and many styles are represented. The coffin-shaped, the horizontal slabs, altar tombs for single or multiple burials and the traditional upright stones are of local limestone with incised, or lead lettering. Imported marbles and granites appear alongside the Victorian

ornamental iron-work, and high polishing is a feature of the more recent memorials. They tell many stories; of the extent of the parish, the inter-relationship of Kinson and Poole families, of sudden death and remarkable old age, of virtue and of lawlessness. The following are of particular interest:

(i) A face, a moth and a skull, in that order, are represented on an early 18th-century stone. The moth perhaps represents the deterioration with which it is associated in the Bible.

(ii) A mastaba-shaped tomb, about five feet long, which carries the inscription 'here lyeth the body of John Weare of Little Canford' (beyond Hampreston) 'glover who was buried here October 15th 1667, a man industrious, peaceable and charitable. In the name of his daughter Catherine he gave to the poor of Kinson, Cudnell and Ensbury the sum of ten shillings yearly to be paid out of his lands at West Moors for ever.'

(iii) Just west of the porch is a large altar-tomb with a lid which moved on a pivot and which is said to have been dedicated to fictitious persons, Jane and William Oakely, 1718 and 1724, and thought to have been used as a hiding place for contraband goods.

(iv) Behind the church and near the large memorial to members of the Fryer family is the grave of a smuggler killed in an affray with the coastguards on a stretch of shore at that time part of Kinson's parish. It is inscribed 'To the memory of Robert Trotman, late of Rowd (e) in the County of Wilts., who was barbarously murdered on the shore near Poole, 24th March 1765. A little tea, one leaf I did not steal, For guiltless blood shed I to God appeal; Put tea in one scale, human blood in t'other, And think what 'tis to slay thy harmless brother.'

The fact that this verse, here corrected, was allowed in the churchyard, along with so much activity in that direction, seems to indicate that the clergy turned a blind eye to contrabanders. When the stone was cleaned and restored the name of Rowd was mis-spelt as Rond.

Inside it can be seen that the church was rebuilt very simply. The new windows are of plain glass but have their shapes outlined with a narrow band of ruby glass. There are six more ornamental windows. The largest, a three-pointed pictorial window, in the east chancel wall was put in place when the chancel was restored and is in remembrance of John Fryer of Wimborne. The windows in the north and south chancel walls were placed in memory of further members of the Fryer family. Their coats-of-arms are shown, and the initials of John Fryer, Fryer-Read or Fryer-Harding are entwined and repeated in each diamond pane of glass. Another pictorial window dedicated in 1895 to Colonel Godfrey Russell is in the east wall of the south aisle, and there is a further light in memory of Charles C. B. Russell 1937.

The Russell's, who lived in nearby Kinson House, and the Fryers, once of Pelhams, were well-known Kinson benefactors.

The stone from an earlier Mass or scratch dial is built into the 13th-century sandstone chancel arch. These dials were roughly marked out to show the hours and had a wooden peg in a central socket to cast the shadow; necessities before the universal possession of clocks. Originally placed in the outer walls of churches the dials occasionally reappeared inside when rebuilding had taken place - as at St. Andrew's, where it is also set in upside down. Also in the chancel, against the north wall, stands a Glastonbury chair. It was saved from that abbey at its destruction and a Latin inscription tells us that it belonged to the monk Johannes. The pulpit and reading desk are of oak and were presented in 1898 in memory of the Reverend Percy Newell and the Misses Newell, who lived at Pelhams. In the floor is a stone inscribed to the memory of John Wellstead and his wife, Jaen, who died in 1782 and 1730 respectively.

Besides several other memorial tablets there is a brass plaque in remembrance of those men of the parish killed during the 1914-18 War, and an illuminated book containing the names of parishioners who gave their lives in the Second World War. The Commandment Board is now tucked away high in the north-west corner of the church. It is of wood and is 'unusual as it represents an open book. This board, together with two giving the Lord's Prayer and the Creed and represented as scrolls, is executed with a freedom from the restriction often found in these boards. Above the Creed and Prayer boards, in the shadow of the inner wall of the tower, is a board bearing the royal arms of Hanover. In 1760 £5 was paid to a Mr. Taylor for 'beautifying' these arms. The organ is modern, given in memory of Felicia Russell in 1943. The tower is entered through a door under the Arm's Board. Inside it will be seen that the walls at their base are almost four feet thick, well shown by the striking Anglo-Norman splayed windows. On the walls hang two old wooden boards. One has a blessing written rather irregularly on it; the writing is surrounded by a design of thorns and surmounted by the head and wings of a robust orange angel. The second board states that the chapel wing was enlarged in 1827 to give an additional 130 seats. Funds were granted from the Society for Promoting the Enlargement of Churches and Chapels.

The mechanism of the clock is on the ground floor of the tower room. Across one corner of the tower is the 19th-century fireplace.

Back in the nave stands the font. The bowl is octagonal and of Purbeck marble, 13th century, arcaded. It is lead lined and in two places the lead on the top rim shows the marks of the locks which once held a cover over the font. It was found necessary to lock covers on to fonts to prevent the theft of the consecrated water for use in Black Magic. Some of the remaining records would make an interesting study in themselves. They are: an old Vestry Book, a Register of Services, Register of Births and Marriages, a Churchwardens' Account Book and the Insurance Policy of the old church building. Besides these is the Faculty granted by John, Bishop of Salisbury, in 1894 for dismantling, rebuilding and extending the old church. The nave and north and south aisles were re-built on this occasion and the pews and galleries removed.

A photograph of the old church shows that it presented a very cluttered appearance. The wagon roof had low cross beams, and an assortment of box pews faced the pulpit and lectern, which were against the south wall to benefit from the only window in that quarter, the skylight. A large iron stove stood roughly in the centre of the church, its flue rising vertically to the roof. The gallery bearing the organ ran across the west end. John Hiley Austin of Ensbury House, one-time vicar of Tarrant Keynston, Dorset, noted in 1852 that some of the older men bowed on entering St. Andrew's and observed that it was the custom in his church for the congregation similarly to bow to their clergyman. A custom lingering from earlier days?

Until 1866 Kinson had been a chapelry annexed to the Vicarage of the church of Great Canford, whose clerics performed the services. The curate of Great Canford had resided in Kinson since 1846. In this year (1866), when Kinson was made a separate parish, the curate officiating at the time, the Reverend Egerton Frederick Daniells, was licensed as the first Perpetual Curate of Kinson. (He became the first vicar of the parish of Heatherlands in 1866 and was succeeded at Kinson by the Reverend Burton Weldon, from Canford, until 1891, when the Reverend Mortimer Sharp became vicar, remaining until 1930.) By an Act of Parliament in 1868 the Perpetual Curacy became a Vicarage with the patronage in the hands of Sir Ivor Guest. The living was worth £150 a year. Tithes belonged to the landowners for two years out of three, and to the vicar for the third. An endowment was created by Sir Ivor Guest and Miss Georgina Talbot aided by the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, and the vicar of Kinson performed Divine Service at the school-chapel of Talbot Village and St. Mark's Church from 1870 to 1919, when this became an independent parish. The living in 1918, with that of Talbot Village, was held with a joint yearly income of only £75.

The Reverend Smith, Kinson's last vicar from Canford, was invited back to spend a week in Kinson and was presented with a splendid silver teapot (value £14) as a mark of deep regard and respect. It appears that someone unaccustomed to the ceremony of tea-making selected the gift. A newspaper of the time comments: '... some surprise was felt at finding the Tea Pot was unaccompanied by its usual appendages but on enquiring we have learned it is the intention of his late parishioners to lose no time in making good the oversight and to request the Reverend Gentleman's acceptance of a Sugar Basin and Cream Ewer to match the Tea Pot'.