

The Parish

The ecclesiastical parish of Kingston Bagpuize became a joint benefice with Fyfield and Tubney in 1948. And since 1974 has included the village of Southmoor. Earlier in this century the Rectory was moved from Fyfield to this village.

Since 2024, the benefice has been temporarily suspended, and the parish is currently served by a part-time priest-in-charge.

Church Life

We are a small family of believers, welcoming the villagers to two services each Sunday (9am and 10.30am), and reaching out to them during the week. We host regular mid-week bible studies, film nights and village lunches, and we oversee the weekly KBS Café and run the annual Village Fete. There is Children Church at our 10.30am service, with an All-Age Worship service once per month.

Pews News, the monthly church newsletter, has full details of activities.

Visit the church website to register: StJB.hubb.church



Kingston Bagpuize with Southmoor



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The Name

Like many Oxfordshire and Berkshire villages, Kingston goes back to early Saxon times, though there is no documentary record of it until the year 970. Its name shows that it was originally a royal possession — King Alfred was born only a few miles away at Wantage.

There were settlements at Kingston and Draycott Moor (Southmoor) in the fifth century and the Royal Charter of King Edward grants “to a faithful servant of mine named Brihteah, seven hides of land in perpetuity in the place called Cingestun for him to have and keep as long as he lives”.

By the time of the Norman Conquests, the territory of Draycott was in the possession of Abingdon Abbey; but when William of Normandy invaded England in 1066, Turchil, who lived here, was killed in the battle of Hastings fighting for King Harold, and the land was sized by Henry De Ferrers, the monks being powerless to prevent him. By 1086, the land had been divided between Henry, who held the southern part bounded by the River Ock, and William, son of Ansculph, whose land was bordered to the north by the Thames. Henry’s under-tenant was Ralf De Bachepez from whose title the village received its second name of Bagpuize.

The Church Building

The first church and churchyard on this site was consecrated by Osmund, Bishop of Salisbury, between 1076-1107. Before then, the people of Kingston worshipped at Longworth. It was built jointly by Ralf de Bachepez and the Lord of the other Kingston Manor, Adelelm, and remained here for nearly 700 years. The Commissioners’ Inventories for 1552 state “Kingston Bagpuyze, thre belles in the belfry A Sance bell A leche bel”- the latter being a ‘Corpse’ or ‘Lynch’ bell rung at funeral processions. The tower was rebuilt in 1603 by Sir David Williams, a judge of the King’s Bench.

In 1799 this building was demolished and rebuilt using a £2000 bequest from the second John Blandy, sheriff of Berkshire who died in 1791. It was modelled on one he had seen in the Apennines in Italy and based on a design by Sir Robert Taylor for a church at Long Ditton, Surrey (which no longer exists).

It was built by the architect John Fidel of Faringdon, in an Italianate design blending a classical style with more modern tastes, and consecrated at Easter 1800.

Small stone pieces of the Norman church were used around the door, and some existing monuments retained. The interior is plain with natural light under a plaster-barrel roof and a half-dome to the East end. It has an aisle-less nave, a transept, dark wood fittings and, by the West door a pair of inset Tuscan columns above which a wooden cupola stands, serving as a belfry. John Rudhall, bell-founder of Gloucester, reworked the old treble bell and made a new tenor bell.

In 1882 Edwin Dolby, architect of Abingdon School, removed most of the fittings such as the box pews, the gallery and the beautiful Georgian front. He left the screen to what had been the squire’s pew in the south transept (now the Vestry) and inserted two ‘Norman’ style windows above the west door. A careful examination of the South-West and North-West corners will reveal the places that the gallery was supported in the walls. He also re-glazed the east window, which was later painted to emulate stained glass, designed by Peter Ibbetson of Oxford.

In 1966, the church became a Grade II listed building along with a chest tomb and a headstone.

In 2014, the 200-year-old bell tower was rebuilt by local craftsmen, funded by grants from the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Historic Churches Trust as well as by personal donations following significant local fund-raising.

Monuments

Several monuments from the original church have survived. Among them are the marble tablets on the South wall in Latin to George Rainsbie, (Rector, d.1624); Edmund Fettiplace (d.1710) and the memorial (now largely concealed behind the organ) to the first John Blandy (d.1736) and his wife Elizabeth, with portrait medallions facing one another.

A chest tomb in the churchyard of Elizabeth-Ann (d.1831), wife of John Barrett, “surgeon of this place” must have been one of the grander additions to the churchyard in the first decades after the church was built.

The New Extension

The neo-Georgian church meeting room, designed by Brian Hook, architect, links to the church building by an arcade of Doric columns and arches. It was opened in 2000 and, equipped with a small kitchen and a disabled lavatory, is much used by the church today.