



Wadebridge Parish

St Breoke Church

A brief History and Guide to the Parish Church of St Breoke

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1259 – Church dedicated to 'St Briocus' on 24th September

1318 – High Altar dedicated on the 12th July

15th Century – Church substantially enlarged

1565 – Young men of St Breoke collect £3.15s.10d for new seats in the Church

1677 – Church extensively rebuilt

1727 – New seats for young people built

1881 – Restoration – pitch pine pews and ceiling added

1901 – Bishop Gott re-dedicating Church on 27th July after much new work

1932 – Post reformation plaster removed and stone walls pointed

1965 – Major flood with 1.45 metres of water inside.

1982 – South Transept became Chapel of St. Michael

1993 – Dedication of new external lanterns and new gates to the drive.

Historical Notes

The Church is situated in the picturesque little valley of Nansent; old Cornish for Holy Valley.

Tradition has it that building started on the hill, but each night it was mysteriously carried into the valley. The workers finally gave up and continued building on the present site. St. Briocus was born in A.D.425 in Cardiganshire but St. Briavels, in the Forest of Dean, bears the Welsh version of his name. After a period with us in Cornwall he left for Brittany where he founded the monastery at St. Brieuc where he died about A.D.515.

The Reredos bears four delightful statuettes of local saints, but Saint Breaca is female and the patron saint of Breage, and not our St. Briocus as was intended!

The 13th Century church (which may not have been the first on this site) was cruciform in shape with a long nave and was dedicated to St. Briocus on the 24th September 1259 by Bishop Branscombe. In 1318, in dedicating the High Altar, Bishop Stapleton recorded the title 'Eglise Sancti Brioci de Nansent alias Pouton with Trefos'. Pouton – present day Pawton – was the Bishop of Exeter's seat, about 1.5 miles west of the Church. Virtual rebuilding of the Church in 1677 was necessary because it had fallen into a state of disrepair, no doubt aggravated by the conditions of the Commonwealth period.

The estimated cost was £1,030, and an appeal to Cornwall's churches only raised £10. However John Tregagle, son of legendary 'Jan' Tregagle, along with some friends, gave substantial help to supplement the Church rates levied at that time.

The first references to the bells appear in 1772 records. Of the present bells, five were cast in 1804 and recast in 1828; the Revd. Thomas Dodd Sherlock adding the sixth in memory of his wife in 1898.

The Wills organ is mentioned in accounts for 1883, when it was originally in the North Transept, it was later moved to the East end of the South Aisle and finally to its present site. This fine organ was fully restored in 1959 and thoroughly overhauled again in 1993. July 14th 1965 brought dreadful floods to Wadebridge and our church when 5.5 inches of rain fell in under 3 hours. Flooded to a depth of 57 inches, the building was closed for almost 12 months for restoration, repair and the building of the exterior flood prevention scheme. Many and varied are the spellings of his name, but here we have used what is probably the commonest, that of SAINT BREOKE.