In 1953 a new Rectory was built, close to the church, on land given by Col. Granville Walton of Longworth Manor.

In 1979, the parish of Longworth was legally joined with the neighbouring parishes of Hinton Waldrist, Charney Bassett and Lyford to form the benefice of Cherbury (the name is taken from the nearby site of Cherbury camp, said to be the remains of an Iron Age fort). In 2004 our benefice was further joined with the benefice of Gainfield, which comprises the parishes of Buckland, Pusey and Littleworth to form one united benefice of Cherbury with Gainfield.

The Rector writes:

This church is a place for solitary moments when people come for peace and stillness and to be lost in the unfolding calm of a special and sacred place. It is also a place for the gathering of God's people and the liturgy is celebrated with music and devotion. Down the centuries, many individuals have been assisted in a deepening of their faith and an enlargement of their spiritual vision at St. Mary's.

There is a unique welcome to be found here particularly on Sundays, but also on special occasions throughout the year. Most people who have come along to services remark upon the genuine faith that they find the people who make up the regular church congregation here in Longworth, and of our other worshippers from churches throughout our benefice.

Furthermore, what also makes it such a distinctive experience - may it be in the stillness of this church during the week, or if you are worshipping here on a Sunday - is that we are praising God in company with the unseen countless generations of people who have had a connection with this church over seven centuries. The profound faces which we see above some of the pillars are reminders that we are made in the image and likeness of God, and hence we share a special affinity with him. Therefore, as we carry out our daily duties, we can be assured that Christ is lovingly with us and that each one of us is special in his eyes.

May God bless you and your spiritual journey, and we hope you will come back and visit us again soon, where a warm welcome awaits you by both the visible and the less visible.

Revd. Talisker Tracey-MacLeod
Rector of Cherbury with Gainfield

If you wish to know more about our churches, services and news, or to be added to our mailing lists, please visit our website: ***www.cherbury-gainfield.org.uk***

The Benefice of Cherbury with Gainfield

a community working to express Christ's love for all

St Mary's Church, Longworth

Information Guide

We welcome you to Longworth, and to this church of St Mary. We hope that you will see this building as more than just an interesting historical monument, for it is also house of prayer and of praise to God. Christians have worshipped God here for over 700 years and continue to do so Sunday by Sunday. This is a place where people have gathered and prayed for centuries, a place where there is such peace and stillness and a sense of presence – both of the Holy Spirit and also of all those countless generations who have gone before us and who have known God in this place.

A first look round from the centre of the church shows that, as with most ancient churches, the original structure was added to as the years went by.

The centre bays of the North arcade (notice the massive square pillars) are the oldest part of the building, probably 13th century; the corresponding pillars were replaced by the present slender, circular pillars. The arches above them are typical of the Early English period. At the same time, a third bay was added to the nave westward, and the present chancel was built.

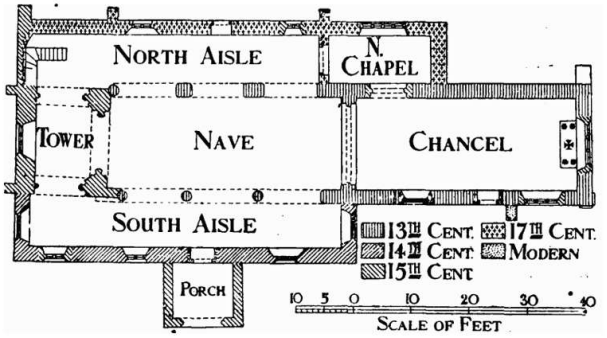
The south aisle was added in the 14th century; the porch and tower in the 15th century. Notice the perpendicular arch at the western end of the nave. The North aisle, including what is now the vestry, was added in the 17th century. Pause to look at the faces over some of the pillars – they must be portraits of people living here when the church was built. Also notice the cross cut in the second pillar of the North arcade – could it be a Crusaders cross?

Now go through the Western arch. In the south-west corner you will see the 13th century font. Near it is a board recording the names of those who founded the old Longworth charities. These are still administered by Trustees. You will see our only fragments of a monument to one of the Marten family. In the north-west corner stone staircase leads to the Belfry where there are currently five bells. None can be rung at present. In 1962, the roof timbers were repaired. In 1986, work was carried out on the tower and roof, and in 1987 the centre aisle and porch floors were re-laid using old tombstones which were no longer standing.

If you look eastwards, at the entrance to the chancel you see the Jacobean screen said to have been given to the parish by Archbishop Laud. Perhaps this was between 1629 and 1633 when he was Chancellor of Oxford University. The communion rails are of slightly later date. In the chancel you will find some interesting brasses on the walls. The oldest is John Henele, Rector of Longworth, dated 1422. On the same wall is a brass to Elynor Godolphin, a gentlewoman from Hinton Waldrist. On the south wall of brasses to the Yate family who lived in Charney Manor. Richard and Joan Yate are depicted in their shrouds (a fairly uncommon type of brass). Some of the children, five sons, bottom left, and eight daughters, bottom right, are in shrouds. In fact, of Richard Yate's fourteen children only four survived to adulthood.

On the north wall, between the old brasses is a modern brass to Dr John Richardson Illingworth, who was Rector here from 1883 until his death in 1915. A distinguished theologian, he wrote many books and also hosted the group, including Bishop Gore, Dr Henry Scott Holland and others, that wrote the "Lux Mundi" essays in 1889. They met every summer in the old Rectory until his death. In 1900 the group, in gratitude to their host, gave the class in the 15th century East window, portraying Christ crucified and crowned. It is in the style commonly known as "Arts and Crafts". The reredos below was given at about the same time by the Misses Kate and Myra Bunce in memory of their parents.
The pulpit is another token of gratitude to Dr Illingworth, given in 1914 by some Americans who had appreciated his writings. A year later the words "Sursum Corda" taken from the communion service were cut over the screen.

In the vestry as a tablet dated 1641 the memory of Dean of Arches and Judge of the High Court of Admiralty, Sir Henry Marten. The son of Sir Henry was the "ungodly Harry" who was among those who signed the death warrant of King Charles I in 1649. Was this the treachery that led to the mutilation of the monument under the tower? In the North aisle, behind the organ, is a window in memory of William and Jean Crum, former owners of Longworth Manor. One of their sons wrote some of the hymns in our hymnbook and also the words of the Easter Carol, "Love is come again".



Plan of Longworth Church.

The organ built by JW Walker in 1856 was given to Longworth church in 1959 by a friend of the then Rector, Dennys Ruddy. The processional cross was made in 1965 in the workshops of Faringdon School by Steven Fletcher, then aged 16, a member of the church choir.

Two Longworth celebrities, distinguished sons of former Rectors, were born here. John Fell in 1626, later Dean of Christ Church and Bishop of Oxford; Richard Doddridge Blackmore in 1825, the author of Lorna Doone. The former is recalled in the epigrams of Tom Brown, Dean of Christ Church: "I do not like thee Doctor Fell, the reason why I cannot tell; but this I know and know full well, I do not like thee Doctor Fell." Dr Kenneth Cragg, Rector from 1947 to 1951 was, in 1970, consecrated as assistant bishop of Jerusalem. He was a noted Arabic and Islamic scholar.