



St James' CHURCH

Mark Fox continues his look at Island churches by visiting West Wight

Standing at the entrance to Yarmouth's main street are two churches – one Methodist, dating from 1881, the other is the Anglican church of St James', dating from 1626. They provide a suitably impressive welcome to this beautiful and historic town.

The first thing that impresses itself on the visitor to St. James' is the tower. It is a well established landmark for those travelling by land as well as by sea. Given Yarmouth's historic importance as a port and now as a harbour the tower must provide many a weary sailor a welcome sight. The upper half of the tower, with its distinctive tall lancet belfry lights and battlemented top, was added in 1831 by local resident D. A. Alexander.

In the tower there is a working clock. It was installed in 1679 by Nicholas Paris of Warwick. Also in the tower is one bell. Like the clock it too is over 300 years old and still in regular use.

Inside the church is quite dark, but there is much beautiful stained glass that is worth noticing, in particular the East Window by C. A. Gibbs.



This is a striking representation of Christ blessing children, which was installed in 1867.

To the side of the main church there is a peaceful Lady Chapel. This quiet space was created in 1948. The altar in this chapel was designed by Sir Charles Nicholson who incorporated a copy of a Raphael picture in the reredos – the picture behind the altar.

The font and pulpit both date from 1873; the lectern dates from 1875. However, the really interesting feature in the middle of the church is the small egg timer style hour glass. The hour glass is over 250 years old and the bracket which holds it is even older, dating back to 1626. The running of the sand in the hour glass would have been a very powerful reminder to the Rector to keep his sermons succinct and his services on time.

The church's organ is particularly interesting. It was bought second-hand in 1897 from the Bournemouth Arcade for £217 and installed in the church. It was moved to its current position in the gallery in 1959. It was built by Henry Speechly & Son of Dalston.

Throughout the church are dotted memorials to various local prominent families, including several generations of Holmes's who served as Governors of the Island. As with many living places of worship the old and the new co-exist happily. This is an old church with many points of historic interest, but in one corner there is a well stocked children's area with toys and books, making a happy play area and clearly showing the next generation of the town's children are welcome in this ancient place of worship. In another corner there is a well used and much valued lending library.



The Anglican church of St James'



(Acknowledgements and thanks go to the official history guide of St. James' Church, the National Pipe Organ Register: http://www.npor.org.uk/cgi-bin/Rsearch.cgi?Fn=Rsearch&rec_index=N09741, and to Nikolaus Pevsner