

Reference: Stabb, John, *Some Old Devon Churches: Their Rood Screens Pulpits, Fonts, etc.*, Vol. II, London, 1911.

BRATTON CLOVELLY. St. Mary the Virgin (three-and-a-half miles from Ashbury Station on Bude branch of L. and S.W.R.) – The church consists of chancel, nave, north and south aisles, south porch with holy water stoup, and west tower with six bells. The date of the church is about 1375, it is in the Decorated style and has exceptionally fine pillars and arches. The chancel has two windows on the north side and two on the south, which are filled with good modern glass. There is a priest's door, but no sign of the piscina; the reredos of alabaster is modern. The chancel is separated from the nave by a high arch, across which there was formerly a rood-screen, but of this the only part remaining consists of some of the lower panels on the south side, which exhibit some fairly good detail. These panels are the lower parts of two bays cut down to the sill level; the rest of the screen was removed in 1820, what became of it is not known. The rood staircase remains, and the entrance and egress opening face west as at Lydford, the staircase being in the thickness of the south side of the chancel arch; there is a hagioscope through the staircase.

The nave is separated from the aisles by three lofty arches on each side, the pillars supporting them being very fine. There are two windows in the south aisle filled with modern glass. The north aisle has an eastern window high up in the wall, and three windows in the north wall, the one at the west end being half the depth of others, and over what was formerly a north doorway; this has now been walled up, but the jambs and arch remain and the openings in the wall for the old cross-bar fastening. In nave and aisles there are modern carved bench-ends of good design. The font is Norman, a massive square block of granite is supported on a short shaft resting on a large block of granite. The four sides are all carved alike; at the corners are men's heads or masks, and each panel has a circular design, possibly intended for the sun, surround by two animals, their tails joining beneath the circle and their protruding tongues almost meeting at the top; the interior of the bowl is circular. There are holes cut in the granite in the rim of the bowl as if there had at one time been a high font cover.

The belfry arch is very lofty, the keystone of the arch touching the roof. There are carved bosses in the roof of the aisles and nave, but none in the chancel, which has a plain plastered ceiling without any visible wood-work. In the masonry of the north wall of the tower there is the top of an arch, as if originally there had been an extension to the north; on examining the exterior of the wall I found additional confirmation of this extension, as on the north face of the tower there is the mark on the wall where the roof originally rested, and the north west corner of the aisle had rough masonry, showing where a wall at one time continued northward. I may be wrong, but I would throw out a suggestion that originally there was a cruciform church on this site, and that there transepts on the north and south sides of the tower, with a nave to the west of the tower. There is additional evidence of this in the west wall of the tower; there is at present no west door, and the masonry of the wall for some distance up from the ground is of different construction to that of the higher part, as if an arch had been filled in. The west end of the south aisle is divided from the remainder of the aisle by an arch, and this portion is now used as a vestry, there is some old glass in the south window.

On the outside of the church the keystone of each window is carved with a human face. In the churchyard is the following epitaph :-

“Weep not for me ye standers by
As you are now so once was I,
As I am now, so must you be
Therefore prepare to follow me.”

The church stands high and from the churchyard there is a very fine view of Dartmoor; it is a pretty drive from the station, and the interesting church makes the place well worth a visit.

The register dates from 1555.



Norman font