

CHAPEL OF ST LAWRENCE

Official list entry

Heritage Category: **Listed Building**

Grade: **II**

List Entry Number: **1193945**

Date first listed: **28-Apr-1952**

Statutory Address 1: **CHAPEL OF ST LAWRENCE, HIGH STREET**

This List entry helps identify the building designated at this address for its special architectural or historic interest.

Unless the List entry states otherwise, it includes both the structure itself and any object or structure fixed to it (whether inside or outside) as well as any object or structure within the curtilage of the building.

For these purposes, to be included within the curtilage of the building, the object or structure must have formed part of the land since before 1st July 1948.

Understanding list entries (<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/understanding-list-entries/>)

Corrections and minor amendments (<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/minor-amendments/>)

Location

Statutory Address: **CHAPEL OF ST LAWRENCE, HIGH STREET**

The building or site itself may lie within the boundary of more than one authority.

District: **Wiltshire (Unitary Authority)**

Parish: **Warminster**

National Grid Reference: **ST 87385 45082**

Details

WARMINSTER

929/6/1 HIGH STREET 28-APR-52 (South side) CHAPEL OF ST LAWRENCE

GV II Possibly 13th or early 14th century tower. The small chapel-like nave was rebuilt c. 1855-7 by the vicar, Rev. Arthur Fane. He may have employed an architect privately, but the name is not recorded.

Materials: Tower mainly of dressed freestone, probably an Oolitic limestone; coursed rubble with Bath stone dressings in the nave. Tiled roofs.

Plan: West tower, two-bay nave without aisles or chancel, north porch.

Exterior: The church sits at the top of a rise at the broad western end of the Market Place. Slightly set back from the building line, it is tightly hemmed in by buildings east and west. There is a small two-stage west tower, probably of late 13th or early 14th century origin, with Perp alterations. It has diagonal buttresses on the west face, and an angle buttress at the north-east. Single cusped light in the north face, a Perp addition (renewed). At the belfry stage are paired lights of the same design. The embattled parapet is of 1855-7, in Perp style, with arcaded panels at the corners. At the south-east angle is a tall Perp spirelet over the stair turret, although it was reportedly renewed in 1642 and rebuilt again in 1897 after lightning damage. It has a band of ornament at half height, with typical mid-17th century geometric patterns. The west face of the tower has a blocked four-centred door, probably c. 1500-50, then a large uncusped single light of late 13th century form, with a further small cusped lancet, perhaps also 13th century, above that. The nave was entirely rebuilt in 1855-7. The style is Dec, with two two-light windows north and south, and a pierced parapet of sinuous S-curves.

Interior: The nave has a simple arch-braced collar beam roof rising from corbels. The sanctuary is marked architecturally only by full-height wall shafts at the last nave bay. The double-chamfered tower arch dies into the piers without capitals, consistent with a late 13th or early 14th century date. The tower arch pier bases have been cut back. Given the unevenness of this alteration, it may be pre-19th century.

Principal Fixtures: There are simple 1850s panelled pews, and wrought-iron altar rails. The font is octagonal, with carved Perp-style panels. In the tower, a painted early 19th century board with the names of feoffees. The east window has mid 19th century glass of good colour but average draughtsmanship, with three figures of saints. The four nave windows and the west window have similar patterned glass with small figure panels. The town clock of 1765, by Thomas Rudd, has no face but strikes and has to be wound daily. It was restored in 1949. The single bell, dated 1657, was cast by John Lott of Warminster.

Subsidiary Features: Mid 19th century dwarf stone wall to the street, with ogee-capped piers, some reduced in height. A lead-covered pipe carries a bell rope from the tower over the narrow alley on the south side into Curfew Cottage. From there, the curfew bell is still rung at 8.00 every evening, an obligation fulfilled since 1651.

History: The church is a non-denominational peculiar, i.e. not under the jurisdiction of the Church of England. There was a chapel in the Market Place in the 13th century. Its precise origins are unclear, but it is traditionally supposed to have been founded in the reign of Edward I, and the dedication to St Lawrence is mentioned in a deed of 1290. So a date c. 1272-89 is possible. It was supposedly endowed by two maiden sisters called Hewett. It was a chapel of ease to St Denys, serving the area that grew up around the new market place. The earliest mention in the church's own records is a lease of meadow land next to Chapelstyle, dated 1489. Despite a petition saying that 800 people took communion there, it was sold by Edward VI in 1550. The people of Warminster bought back their chapel in 1574, with feoffees elected from among the townspeople to administer it. The feoffees have ever since invited the vicar of Warminster to serve as unpaid chaplain. The upper north face of the tower was rebuilt in 1642, as was the spirelet. Since 1669 the church has been open to all denominations. The nave was rebuilt in 1725 by William Leigh, a local architect-builder, and again in 1855-7, when 17th century houses in front of the chapel were demolished to open it up to the market place. The curfew bell is still rung every evening at 8.00; at 4.00 a.m. the awakening bell was rung from 1694 - c. 1800. Regular services are still held.

Sources: Pevsner, N & Cherry, B., The Buildings of England: Wiltshire (1975), 555. Victoria County History, Wiltshire, Volume 8: Warminster, Westbury and Whorwellsdown Hundreds (1965), 117-24. Lambeth Palace Library, Incorporated Church Building Society (ICBS) archive, file 1476 (www.churchplansonline.org)

Reasons for Designation: The Chapel of St Lawrence, Warminster, is designated at Grade II for the following principal reasons:

- * The small tower, probably late 13th or early 14th century, is a visually important landmark in the town centre.
- * The Victorian Gothic nave, c. 1855-7, possesses architectural quality.
- * The site reflects Warminster's medieval expansion from the parish church of St Denys towards the present market place.
- * Its unusual status as a non-denominational peculiar owned by the borough reflects the fluctuating fortunes of town and church at the Reformation.

Legacy

The contents of this record have been generated from a legacy data system.
Legacy System number: **312912**

Legacy System: **LBS**

Legal

This building is listed under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended for its special architectural or historic interest.



Map

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End of official list entry



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