

**Ref:** 2024 - 098489. **Church: Frome:** St John the Baptist.  
**Diocese.** Bath & Wells. **Archdeaconry:** Wells  
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## Statement of Significance

### Section 1

#### 1) Brief history and description of the church building(s), contents, churchyard and setting

St John the Baptist Church sits at the heart of Frome within the Frome Conservation Area between Bath Street and Vicarage Street and is located on the edge of the present retail and commercial town centre.

There are multiple accesses to the site: The main forecourt entrance via Bath Street to the west (pedestrian and vehicle) or stepped access from Church Street alongside the separately list and unique external 'Via Crucis', a level path from Vicarage Street to the east, or via the parallel cobbled lanes of Blindhouse Lane and Gentle Street to the south. The churchyard surrounds the church with the principal section located to the south set out in terraced form on the hillside. The large forecourt facing Bath Street has an impressive five arched Tudor Gothic stone screen by Jeffrey Wyatt, added in 1814 soon after Bath Street was cut as a new road.

The church is constructed of coursed rubble with Bath ashlar dressings and the main roofs are dressed in lead. The Chancel and Ken Chapel have stone slates and the vestry and organ loft roofs are finished in Welsh Slates. The church consists of a large Nave, North Aisle, South Aisle, Chancel, Lady Chapel, Ken Chapel, Vestries, Lavatory, Baptistry, Tower (with spire) and South Porch.

The significant Saxon church founded by St Aldhelm that stood on the site from about 685 was replaced in the late C12 with a Norman building with the Early English south side tower being built in C13. The addition of side and chantry chapels continued through the C14 culminating in a major extension of the nave and addition of the upper tower and spire in the early C15.

Many medieval details were removed at the time of the English Civil War when all non-heraldic glass was smashed out and much of the church plastered. However significant vestiges from the C12 to C15 work still survive as well as ex-situ examples of C9/C11 carved stones set in a former hagioscope under the tower. Following much neglect of the fabric during the C18 the chancel was much improved in the 1840s through the generosity of Longleat, the then patrons.

The main body of the church was substantially restored and further changes to the chancel made in 1852- 1866 by C E Giles for the Rev W J E Bennett, with the addition of High Anglican fittings. The external 'Via Crucis' approach from the North East to the church was added in 1866, the work of James Forsyth. The Rood Screen by Kempe was reinstated in 1892.

Outside the East wall of the chancel lies the much engrossed tomb of Bishop Thomas Ken buried in 1711 after his death at Longleat House.

### References:

The Buildings of England, Somerset: North & Bristol. Andrew Foyle and Nikolaus Pevsner 2011 – Frome: St John's, Bath Street - Pg 506-509

Historic England Listing Description: Parish Church of St John the Baptist, List Entry Number: 1345441

Somerset Historic Environment Record 26309