



THE CHURCHES CONSERVATION TRUST

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ST JAMES'S CHURCH

DRAYCOT CERNE
WILTSHIRE





THE CHURCHES CONSERVATION
TRUST WELCOMES YOU TO
ST JAMES'S CHURCH
DRAYCOT CERNE, WILTSHIRE

Many years ago Christians built and set apart this place for prayer. They made their church beautiful with their skill and craftsmanship. Here they have met for worship, for children to be baptised, for couples to be married and for the dead to be brought for burial. If you have time, enjoy the history, the peace and the holiness here. Please use the prayer card and, if you like it, you are welcome to take a folded copy with you.

Although services are no longer regularly held here, this church remains consecrated; inspiring, teaching and ministering through its beauty and atmosphere. It is one of more than 300 churches throughout England cared for by The Churches Conservation Trust. The Trust was created in 1969 and was, until 1994, known as the Redundant Churches Fund. Its object is to ensure that all these churches are kept in repair and cared for, in the interests of the Church and Nation, for present and future generations.

Please help us to care for this church. There is a box for donations or, if you prefer to send a gift, it will be gratefully received at the Trust's headquarters at 89 Fleet Street, London EC4Y 1DH (Registered Charity No. 258612).

We hope that you will enjoy your visit and be encouraged to see our other churches. Some are in towns; some in remote country districts. Some are easy and others hard to find but all are worth the effort.

Nearby are the Trust churches of:

ALTON PRIORS, ALL SAINTS
8 miles SW of Marlborough off A345

LEIGH DELAMERE, ST MARGARET
2 miles W of exit 17 and N of M4

BERWICK BASSETT, ST NICHOLAS
8 miles NW of Marlborough off A4361

OLDBURY-ON-THE-HILL, ST ARILD
7 miles SW of Tetbury off A433

LEIGH, ALL SAINTS OLD CHANCEL
3 miles W of Cricklade off B4040

ST JAMES'S CHURCH

DRAYCOT CERNE, WILTSHIRE

by TIM COUZENS

INTRODUCTION

St James's church is approached by a curving drive, lined with Wellingtonia pines, across a bridge over the lake formed from a tributary of the River Avon, and into the grounds of the former Draycot House. The church and manor were at the heart of one of the largest estates in north Wiltshire, covering an area of 4,350 acres (1760 hectares) when it was sold in 1920.

From the time of the Norman Conquest the manor of Draycot (meaning 'cot or shelter near where something had to be dragged or drawn') was held by the de Venox family and the church was founded by them in the late 12th century. During the 13th century the manor passed to the de Cerne family, from Dorset, who gave the place the second part of its name and held the estate until 1452. The Long family added greatly to the estate



St James's church exterior and tower from the west

(CHRISTOPHER DALTON)

during a tenure of over 350 years, their wealth increasing dramatically by a series of advantageous marriages. However, the disastrous alliance of the heiress Catherine Tylney-Long to William Pole-Wellesley, the 'black sheep' of the Wellesley family, in 1812 initiated years of decline until the estate passed to the Earl Cowley in 1863. Each of these families has left memorials in the church and, since Draycot House was demolished in 1955, the church has become the most important reminder of this once great estate.

A dwindling congregation led to the closure of St James's as a parish church in 1995 and it is now cared for by The Churches Conservation Trust. Recent repairs have included the relaying of the stone slates on all the roofs.

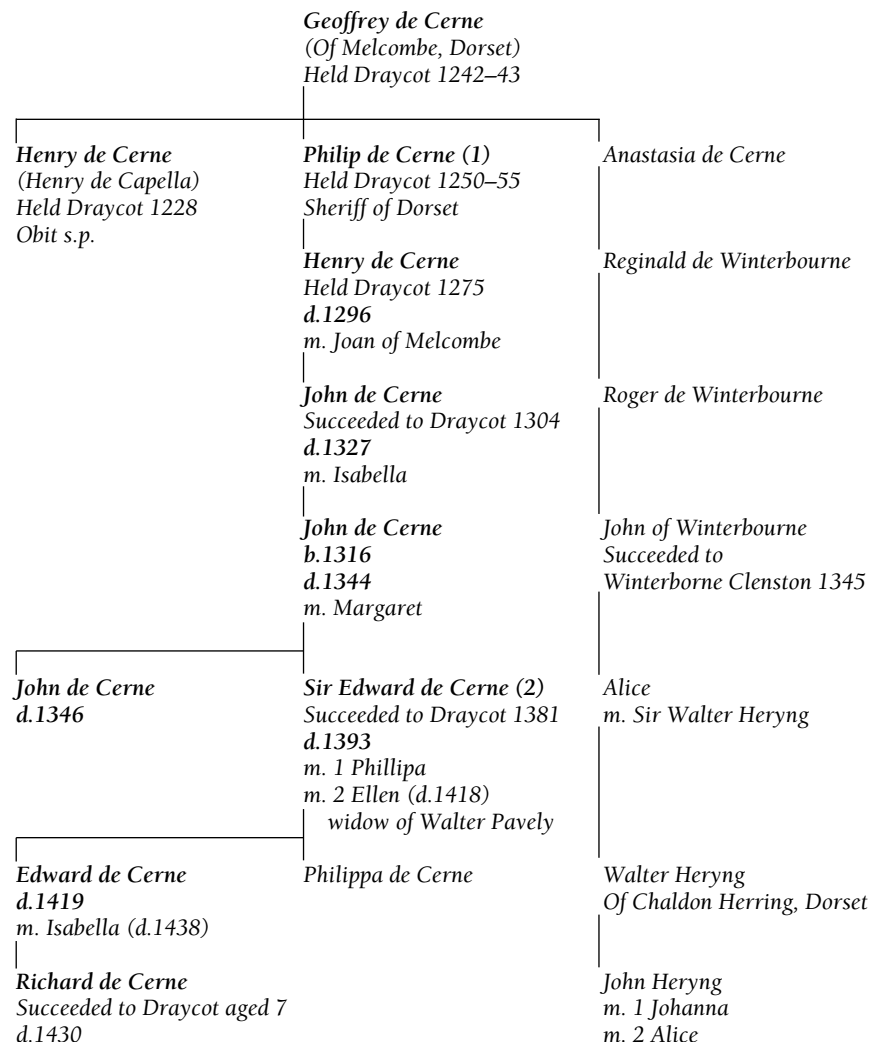
THE CHANCEL

Although a church stood at Draycot in the later 12th century the earliest feature inside the chancel is the double piscina on the south side of the sanctuary. In the middle of the 13th century the order of service required a lavabo (for the priest to wash his hands in), as well as the excess wine to be drained away after the service – hence the double piscina. During this period (1250–55) the manor was held by Philip de Cerne and it is possible that the chancel, along with the rest of the church, was rebuilt by him at that time. It is simple but dignified in design, with three lancet windows on the north and south sides (one on the south a low-side), a triplet in the east wall, and a priest's doorway. The two last were largely renewed when the whole of the south wall and most of the east wall were rebuilt in the 19th century. Three consecration crosses were uncovered on the wall behind the altar during restoration work in the 1960s, with hints of their former bright colours.

There are two important memorials to the de Cerne family in the chancel. The first is to Philip de Cerne (d.1295?), a full-length recumbent effigy in plain limestone. He is portrayed as a knight in full armour, probably a crusader but rather late. His feet rest on a dog, a traditional feature indicating that he died at home. The facial features are carved with less detail than the rest of the figure and it is possible that a mask covered that part of the effigy. The beautiful cinquefoiled canopy is of a later date (14th century) and according to the Dorset historian Hutchins 'under it, in a stone coffin, are his bones very large and very perfect'.

His great-great-grandson, Sir Edward de Cerne, has the second important memorial – a monumental brass on a flat tombstone in the centre of the chancel floor. It depicts him in armour of the period with Ellen his second wife. She is wearing her widow's weeds, dating the brass to 1393 –

THE de CERNE FAMILY of WILTSHIRE & DORSET



Based on the pedigree by CE Long, *Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Magazine*
With modifications – see *Victoria County History Wiltshire*

the year of Sir Edward's death. It is a good example of the period, despite the loss of the crest and shields. The Norman French inscription at the base of the brass reads:

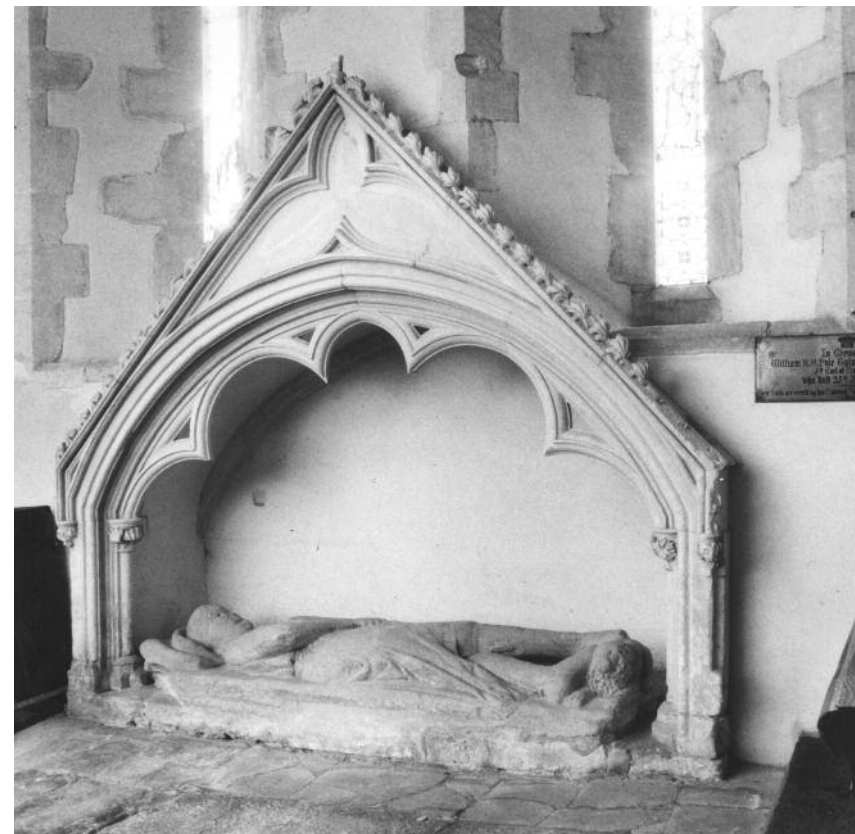
Moun Sire Edward Cerne chevalier o Elyne sa femme gist icy: De les queus almes Dieux a sa pyte eyt m'ci. Amen

– roughly translated as 'Edward Cerne, knight, and Ellen his wife lie here, on whose souls may God have mercy. Amen.'

Traces of another four brasses or plates can be seen on the chancel floor, all on marble slabs. The most important of these lost brasses was to the memory of Philippa, daughter of Sir Edward de Cerne – another full-length effigy with a similar inscription. The middle portion of the marble slab is also now missing, having been removed in Victorian times to accommodate a rector's burial. Indeed, so many tombs lie under the chancel floor that the original paving stones can only be seen under the Jacobean-style pews on either side of the two steps leading down from the nave. This unusual feature is due to the nave being at a higher level because of the slope of the land. There are very few other churches in England with sunken chancels. Examples include Aston Flamville, Leicestershire, Cavendish, Suffolk and Wickhampton, Norfolk. The date 1509 high on the west wall above the arch appears to refer to a former roof, the line of which is clearly visible.

According to the historian Aubrey 'Sir Thomas Long, knight, lyes buried by the North wall of the Chancell, under a rich gothique altar monument without inscription: his heaume and crest do yet hang up over it'. An inscription is unnecessary since the tomb is covered in family crests and heraldic devices, including the fetterlock, borrowed from the de Cernes. Unfortunately some of the colours have been rather unscientifically restored – probably in Victorian times. The 'heaume' refers to an actual jousting helmet dating from about 1500, hinged at the back, with a working visor, formerly hanging on the south side of the chancel with a sword. The crest, or ceremonial helmet, hung directly above the tomb, with a pair of gauntlets. These items are, at the time of writing, destined to go to the Devizes Museum for safe-keeping. Authentication at the Tower of London has dated the helmet to the late 15th century and the components of the crest would date to 1508 – the year Sir Thomas Long died. His will included bequests to all of the local churches and his velvet 'gown' to be used by the priest as a cope.

Aubrey mentions another tomb, that of Sir Henry Long (son of Sir Thomas) who died in 1556 – a plain black marble monument on the south side of the chancel; but this tomb disappeared many years ago.



Effigy of Philip de Cerne d.1295? – north wall of chancel

(CHRISTOPHER DALTON)

When William Pole-Tylney-Long-Wellesley died in 1863 a hatchment was placed on the south chancel wall and new altar rails were installed by his aunts Dorothy and Emma Tylney-Long. He was the last male descendent of the Long family of Draycot and, by his will, the estate passed to his cousin Henry Wellesley, Earl Cowley. The Cowley family did much to repair the church soon after their inheritance, including the renewal of the chancel roof. Excellent stained glass, probably by Clayton & Bell, portraying the Good Shepherd, the four Evangelists and St James was inserted in the six lancet windows. The east window, by Ward & Hughes, was dedicated to the memory of the 1st Earl Cowley (d.1884).

Key to the plan of the church

The Chancel

- 1) Stone effigy of Philip de Cerne (d.1295?)
- 2) Brasses of Sir Edward de Cerne (d.1393) and Ellen his wife.
- 3) Tomb of Sir Thomas Long (d.1508)
- 4) Hatchment of William Pole-Tylney-Long-Wellesley (d.1863)
- 5) East window in memory of the 1st Earl Cowley (d.1884).

The Nave

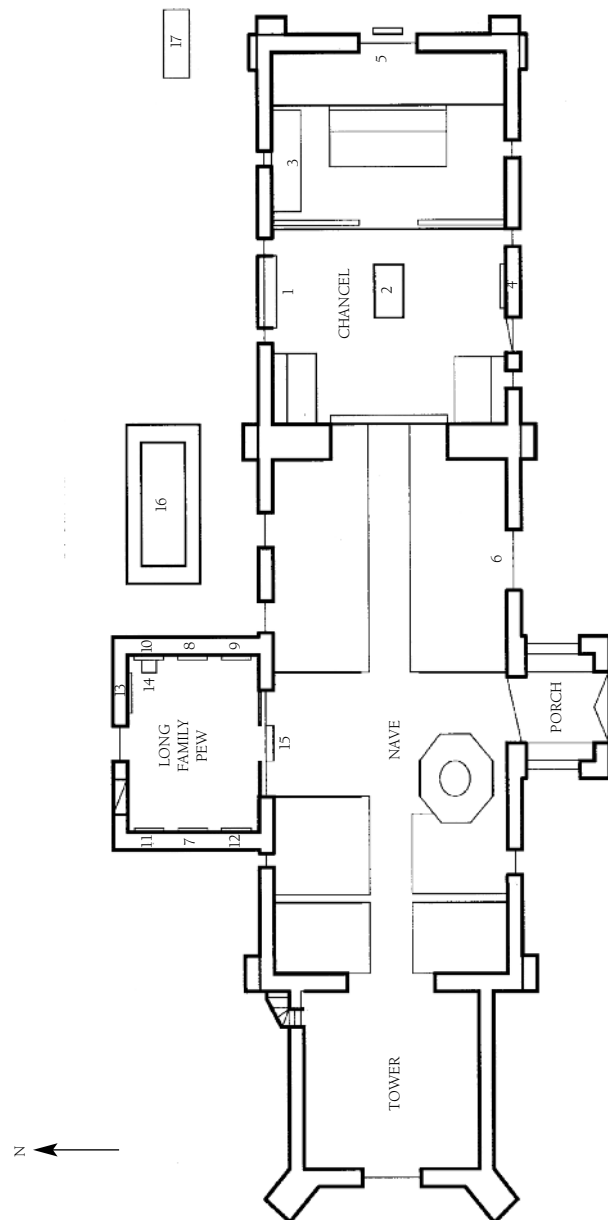
- 6) Window in memory of William Pole-Tylney-Long-Wellesley (d.1863) with stained glass added in memory of the 2nd Earl Cowley (d.1895)

The Family Pew

- 7) Sir James Long Bart. (d.1728)
- 8) Sir Robert Long MP (d.1767)
- 9) Sir James Tylney-Long (d.1794) and his first wife Harriet (d.1777)
- 10) Sir James Tylney-Long (d.1805), the last Baronet.
- 11) Catherine Tylney-Long (d.1823) the second wife of Sir James Tylney-Long
- 12) Catherine Pole-Tylney-Long-Wellesley (d.1825)
- 13) William Pole-Tylney-Long-Wellesley, 5th Earl Mornington (d.1863)
- 14) (Marble death mask on a pedestal) - Adelaide dau. of Earl Cowley
- 15) (Above the arch) Victoria Pole-Tylney-Long-Wellesley (d.1897)

The North Churchyard

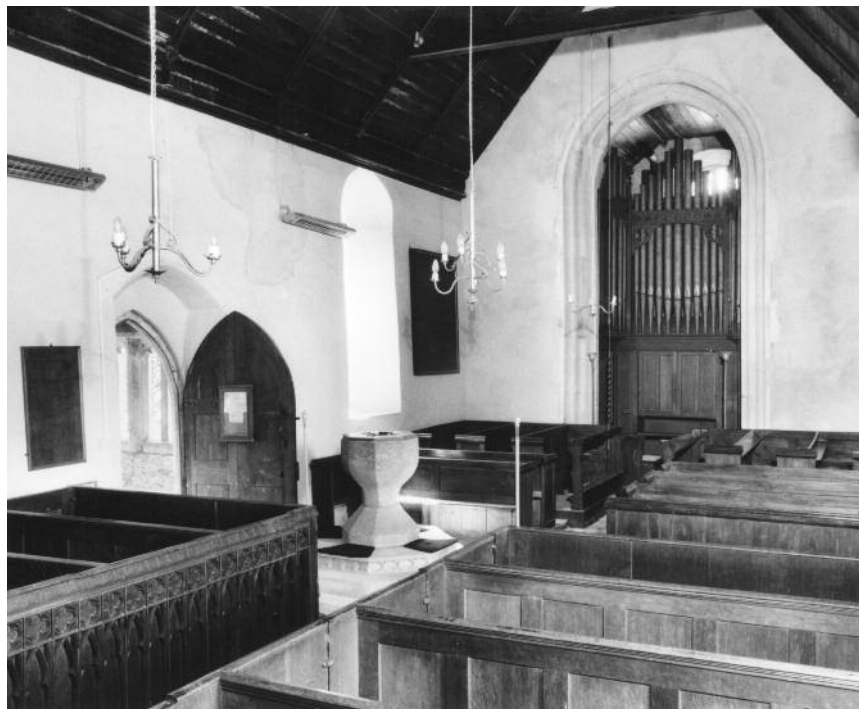
- 16) The Cowley family grave
- 17) Henry Wellesley, 3rd Earl Cowley



Plan of St. James's church, Draycot Cerne, Wiltshire

THE NAVE, TOWER AND PORCH

It seems that the nave was once of similar mid-13th century date to the chancel. From this period two matching lancet windows remain, as does the south doorway. A fragment of stone with dog-tooth ornament built into the wall beside the doorway, where there is also a broken stoup, appears to be earlier still. The gables, with carved heads at their feet, and the two two-light windows in the eastern part of the north wall, belong to 14th century alterations. A stone escutcheon on the north nave wall is decorated with the crest of the Long family dating from the late 15th century, soon after their purchase of the manor. The fine box pews in the eastern part of the nave date from 1786 – the gift of Sir James Tylney-Long. They are in the Georgian Gothick style and uniform with them are the pulpit, and the screen and panelling in the family pew. The original arch between the nave and chancel was rebuilt in 1848.



The nave looking west towards font and organ

(CHRISTOPHER DALTON)

After 1863 the Cowley family completely remodelled the nave. A west gallery was removed and choir stalls were provided. The nave was re-roofed and the pulpit moved to its present position. A new window was inserted on the south side, in memory of William Pole-Tylney-Long-Wellesley by his friend Arthur Palliser. Stained glass by Ward & Hughes was added to this window in 1896 to the memory of the 2nd Earl Cowley (d.1895). Other windows in the nave and elsewhere contain clear glass, with elegantly patterned leading: on a pane in the porch is scratched 'Richard Messiter 1846', probably establishing the date and the craftsman responsible for this glass. The large octagonal font is likely to be 15th century in origin. Part of the surname Palliser is visible on the base, by the door; the font was therefore placed in its present position during the Victorian renovation, probably as part of the memorial to William Pole-Tylney-Long-Wellesley. The Bibles date from 1876 and were a gift of the 1st Earl Cowley.

The parish registers of baptisms, marriages and burials are complete from 1690 and from these a list of rectors has been compiled. Their names are recorded on a board just inside the door. Apart from their Sunday duties, the rectors and their churchwardens also oversaw the distribution of the Draycot Charities. These stemmed from legacies made by the Long, Mason and Angell families and included bread and coal for the poor as well as money for apprenticeships. Details of these charities are recorded on the large black boards on the walls adjacent to the choir stalls. The fine organ, with two manuals and pedals, was built by A Hunter & Son in 1899–1900.

The tower probably dates from the early 17th century in its entirety and is the only part of the church to be built of ashlar rather than rubble. It has a higher stair turret with carved gargoyles and a weathervane, and an attractive traceried west window. The early Victorian stained glass in this window, including a figure of King David, is now very largely concealed by the organ.

The 1st Earl Cowley was the French Ambassador for many years and it was in connection with foreign affairs that the Marquess of Salisbury visited Draycot House in 1864. Unfortunately he missed his return train to London and was so annoyed that he insisted on paying for a new chiming church clock. It was made by Dents, clockmakers to Queen Victoria, and installed in 1865. The two quarter bells are by Warner of London, 1865, and the 15-cwt hour bell is by James Wells of Aldbourne, 1803.

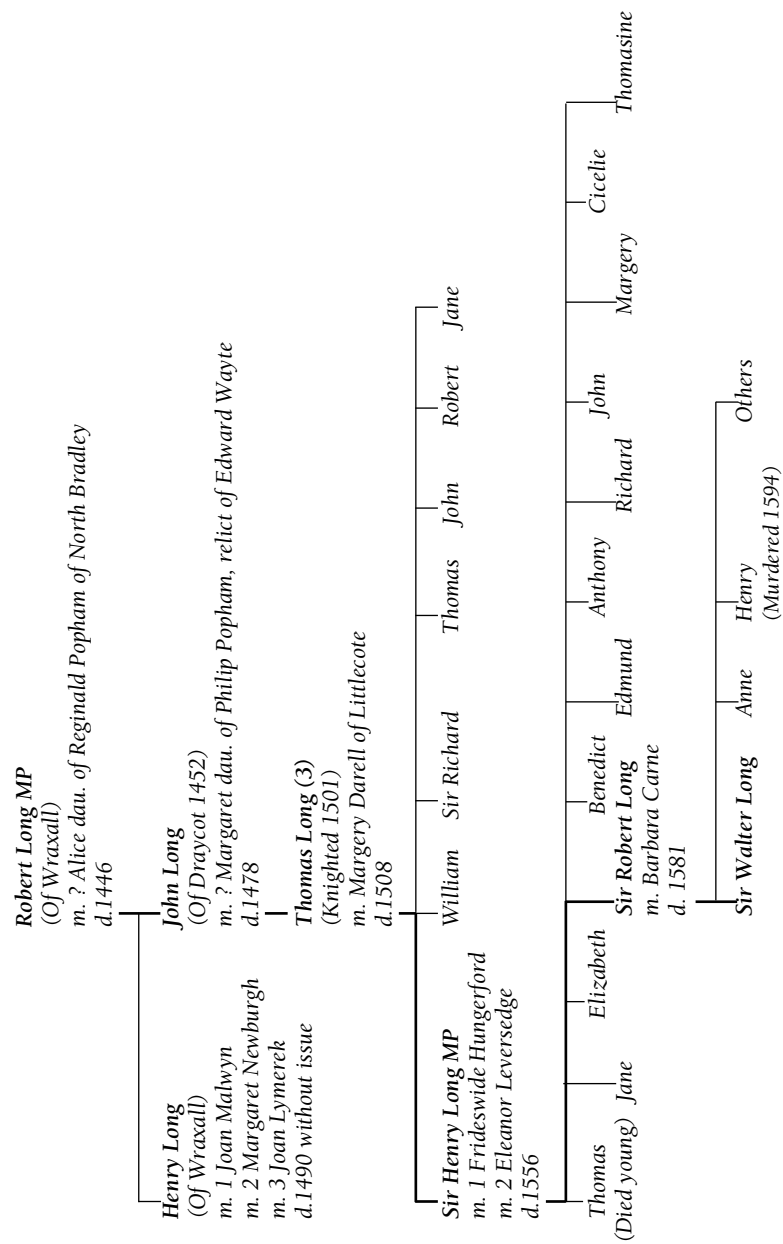
Striking features of the 15th century south porch are the six-light windows, in the Perpendicular style, on both sides and the large 17th century sundial (with a gnomon dated 1877) over the entrance.

THE LONG FAMILY PEW

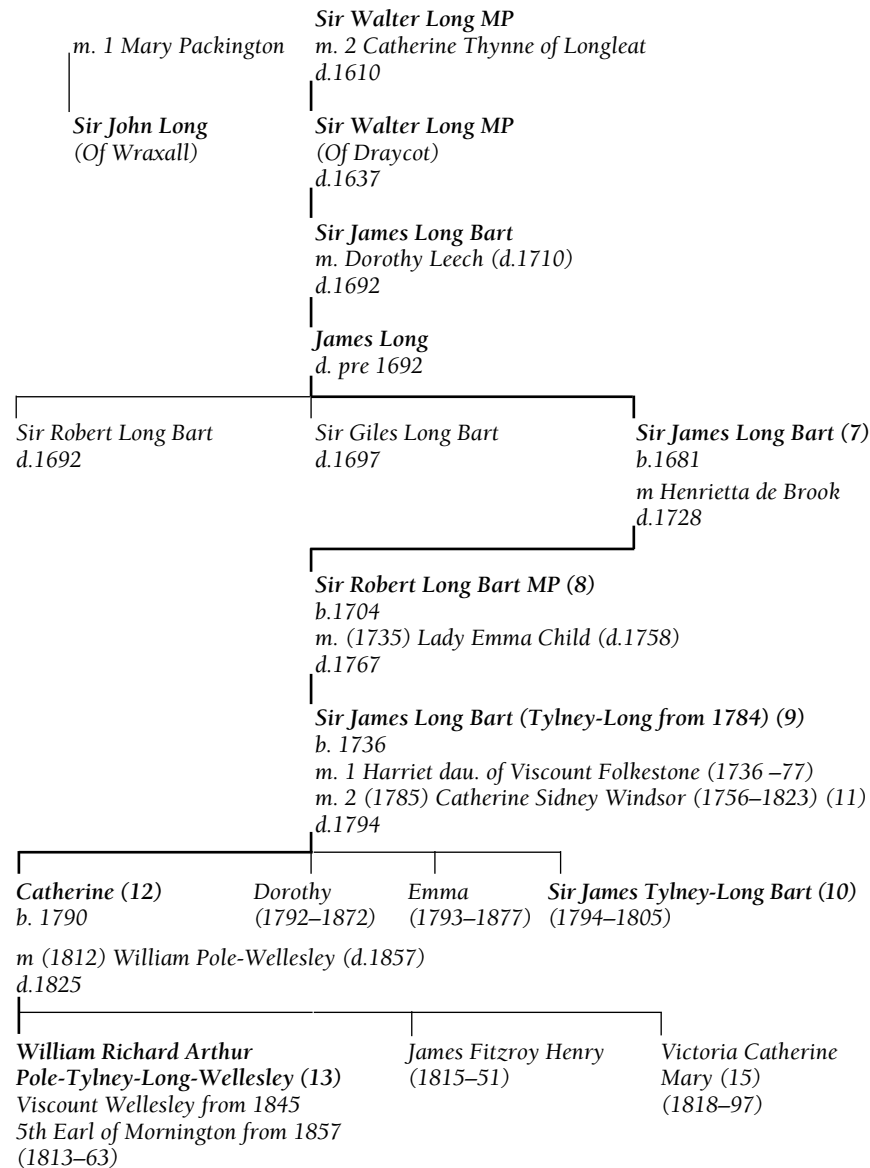
The Long Family Pew was added to the north side of the nave in 1692. Each subsequent burial, in the family vault below, was recorded with a marble tablet on the walls of the pew for the last five generations of the Longs of Draycot. The numbered plan of the church, with a key, lists nine memorials in the Family Pew and the Long family tree describes their relationships.

The monument to Sir James Long Bt (d.1728) consists of a white marble tablet, richly decorated and part gilded, with a long pseudo-Latin inscription describing his many virtues. Directly opposite, above the fireplace, is the much grander monument to Sir Robert Long MP (d.1767) including a marble bust. He married Emma Child, the daughter of the 1st Earl Tylney. Their first two sons died in infancy and it was the third son, James, who inherited Draycot estate. Sir James Long was married twice – firstly to

THE LONG FAMILY of DRAYCOT CERNE & SOUTH WRAXALL



THE LONG FAMILY of DRAYCOT CERNE





Harriet, daughter of Viscount Folkestone (d.1777) and secondly to Catherine Sidney Windsor, daughter of the Earl of Plymouth. When the 2nd Earl Tylney died without issue in 1784 James inherited the Tylney estates through his mother and took the surname Tylney-Long. It is probably no coincidence that the year 1784 also saw the rebuilding of Draycot House; and the purchase of the adjacent Seagry Estate added further to the prestige of the Tylney-Longs. Three daughters were born – Catherine, Dorothy and Emma – and finally an heir, also named James, born in 1794. Unfortunately the family's happiness was not to last. Sir James Tylney-Long died later the same year and his only son died in childhood in 1805.

On the death of the last Baronet his eldest sister, Catherine Tylney-Long, unexpectedly became the richest heiress in England. The Duke of Clarence (later William IV) sought her hand – and her great wealth – after his separation from Dorothy Jordan, but Catherine found him unattractive. Instead, she was courted by the nephew of the Duke of Wellington – William Pole-Wellesley – against the wishes of her mother. Lady Catherine finally relented and the marriage took place in 1812, the bridegroom taking the surname Pole-Tylney-Long-Wellesley. Three children were born – William in 1813, James in 1815 and Victoria in 1818. It is impossible, in this brief history, to describe the full horror of the next few years. Suffice it to say that the money was used to pay massive gambling debts, the estates were dismembered, William was unfaithful, the three children were made wards of court in Chancery and it was no surprise that Catherine died at the relatively young age of 35. 'Wicked William' died penniless at Brussels in 1857 and he is not buried in the vault.

William Pole-Tylney-Long-Wellesley became the 5th Earl of Mornington and inherited the wreck of the Tylney-Long estates. He began some improvements at Draycot but spent much of his time in Paris where his cousin, Earl Cowley, was the French Ambassador. He died there in 1863 but was brought back to be buried at Draycot and his richly decorated monument includes an angel holding a model of part of the church and house. Above the arch is the monument to his sister Victoria and his maiden aunts Dorothy and Emma Tylney-Long. In 1897 Victoria Pole-Tylney-Long-Wellesley was the last to be buried in the vault, in the last space left for a coffin, and the crypt has been permanently sealed ever since.

Memorial to Sir James Long d.1728 with Latin inscription

(CHRISTOPHER DALTON)

When the house was still standing the family pew was richly furnished with carpets, a chandelier and a velvet-covered bench running all the way round. The seat of the lord of the manor, dated 1620, remained in the pew until it was stolen in 1995. A secret door behind the panelling provided a separate entrance from the house so that the family did not have to mix with the villagers. It is said that during the sermon the curtains between the nave and the pew would be closed and servants would bring mulled wine and other refreshments from the house. A photograph of Draycot House hangs directly below the memorial to Sir James Long Bt (d.1728) and a sketch of the old Draycot House, taken from Aubrey's history, is in a small frame next to the archway.

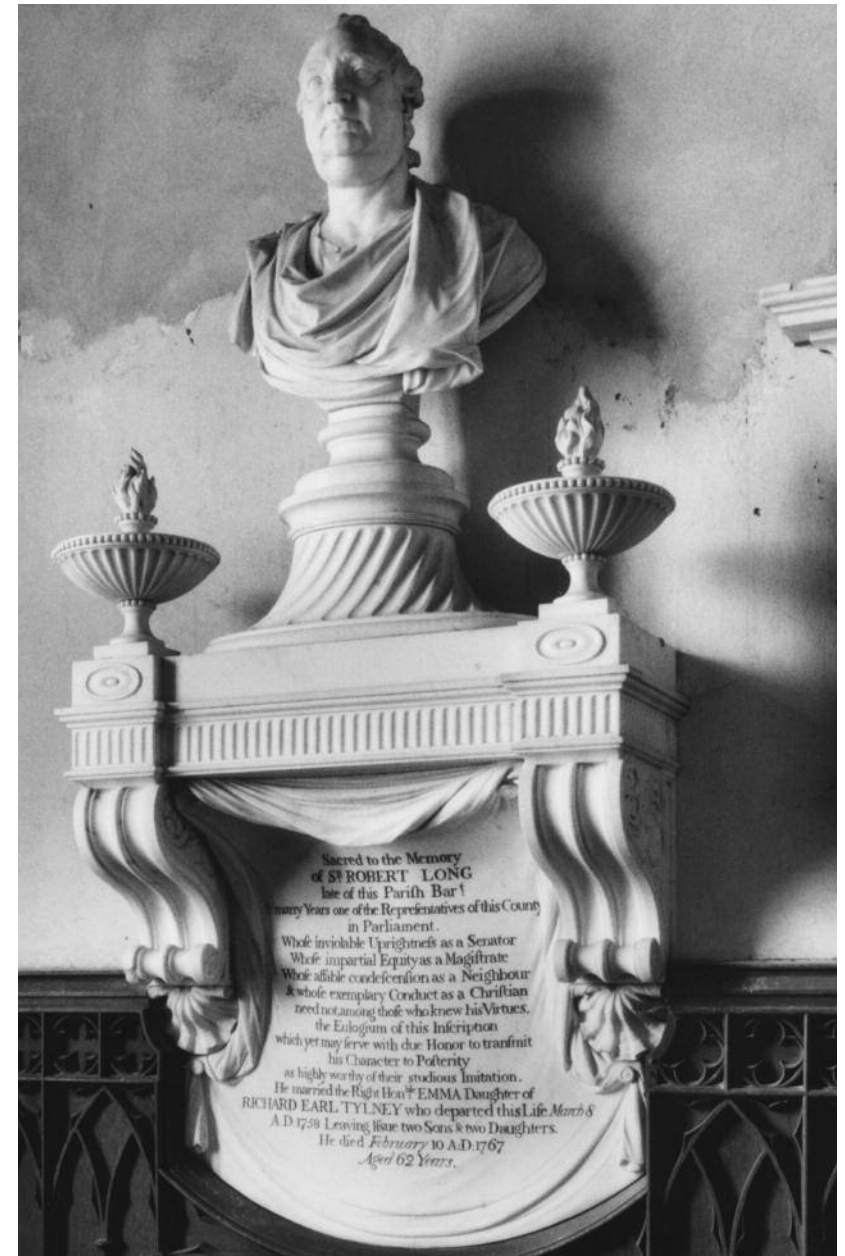
THE CHURCHYARD AND GROUNDS

The first and second Cowley Earls are buried in a family tomb on the north side of the churchyard. A separate grave for the third Earl Cowley is further down towards the back of the chancel. The limestone tomb includes an inlaid bronze crest. Also in the churchyard are several 18th century carved tombstones and a mighty copper beech tree.

The grounds beyond the churchyard are private. However, the remains of Draycot House can be seen from the church. About two-thirds of the balustrade wall are visible from the base of the tower. A central flight of steps led down to a fountain in the middle of the lawn with a gravel path beyond to the edge of the lake. The cellars remain behind this wall and the stables can be seen beyond the tennis court. The new house stands on the site of the former laundry and the present (1997) owner of the estate is Mr Edward Bent. To the east, a row of yew trees on the edge of the lawn marks the drive to the former estate offices and walled garden. The present village of Draycot Cerne lies outside the grounds, about half a mile (0.8 km) to the south-west.

Memorial to Sir Robert Long MP d.1767 including marble bust

(CHRISTOPHER DALTON)



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Marble death mask of Adelaide, daughter of 1st Earl Cowley, d.1843 (CHRISTOPHER DALTON)



Tomb of Sir Thomas Long, d.1508

(CHRISTOPHER DALTON)

Front cover: South exterior with porch (CHRISTOPHER DALTON).

Back cover: Monumental brasses to Sir Edward de Cerne d.1393 and Ellen his wife (CHRISTOPHER DALTON).

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