

## VISIT TO NORTH HILL CHURCH, ST TORNEY - 3RD OCTOBER 2019.

The immediate impression of the interior of St Torney's church is one of space. The width of the arches and the slenderness of the columns supporting them creates a great feeling of openness.



St Torney's Church - from *The Book of Spoure*, 1694



Interior - taken 2017

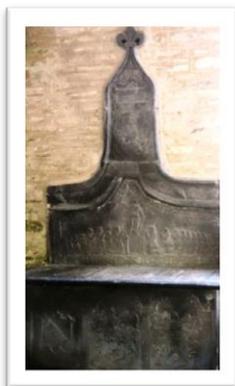
The combination of these two architectural elements gives what is essentially a very large church an unexpected delicacy. It is a church that seems to have had very little modern intrusion and is uncluttered by more recent additions. The wagon roofs are beautiful indeed and seem to add to the feeling of fragility that the whole church possesses.

Set against this airy background are two wonderful monuments.

The Spoure tomb in the South or Trebartha aisle is extremely impressive and rare in Cornwall. The splendour of the whole edifice is again countered by a gentleness of expression, a real human creation for a lost and loved ten-year old son. Something which had not ever struck me before is how similar in style and execution the figures on this tomb are to figureheads on ships. I wondered if the same artisan-carvers could have worked on both? The figure of the mother of Henry Spoure is a gentle figure and deeply and genuinely human. The slate panels of heraldry to the left of the tomb are wonderfully executed and again, quite rare in Cornwall.



The Spoure Monument and Mary, the mother of Henry Spoure



The Vincent tomb showing the Vincent family

The slate altar tomb to Thomas Vincent, 1606, in the North aisle is quite magnificent and the carving is intricate and stunning, the figure of death with his scythe and arrow, the figures of Thomas and his

wife, the ranks of fifteen children and the skulls over two of the children showing that they predeceased their parents all add to the complexity of this splendid tomb which appears to be complete and in very good condition.

Of particular interest, as it ties in with some of my research into church seating plans, is the room above the porch. Although, quite rightly Brian Davis could not allow us to climb up to this room, the massive steps being unsafe, it is interesting in that it is a rare example of this phenomena in Cornwall. The only other I have visited is at St Enoder where the entrance is outside the church in the porch rather than inside as it is here. These rooms would have seen much activity in the past and might well have been a focus of community activity – Church Wardens’ meetings, discussion by the twelve men of the parish about the need for a seating plan and perhaps consumption of a certain amount of church ale? Although getting down those vertiginous steps afterwards would have been somewhat of a challenge.



This is a church that manages to be at once both large and spacious and unassuming. It does not impose but it does impress. It has a quiet dignity and I do hope that it can be treasured and cosseted for all those who wish to visit in the years to come.

Maxine Symons

(I visited in connection with my research into post-Civil War church seating plans and the Bond Family of Quethiock who twice married with the Spoure family.)