

The Church of St Peter ad Vincula - Combe Martin

The Story of the Parish Church by ([Surgeon](#)) [Allan Edward Mahood](#) (undated)

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Book Transcription (Verbatim)

Part of the town's name was derived from Martin of Tours or Martin de Tours ("Martinus of Combe") ["Kemys William", Gen. & 1st Baron of Kemys from a noble family of landholders and feudal governance in Wales], who obtained a grant of this Manor of Cumbe, or Cumba [Combe], and other manors, soon after the Norman Conquest.

Martin's signature, "Martin de Walis de Tours", (i.e., Martin of Wales) occurs as the first witness to the foundation charter of Totnes Priory about 1087-8. Some writers say Martin died before 1086 or in 1089 (Watkin, "Totnes Priory").

A dispute is recorded between the monks of St. Pancras, Lewes, Sussex, and Robert, the son (fitz) of Martin, about the chapel of Cumba at present-day [Combe Martin](#). The dispute was brought before William, Bishop of Exeter, and his synod in 1133 (Vespasian manuscript F. XV, f. 171). This Vespasian manuscript is typically dated to around the 13th century and housed in a library or archive, such as the British Library.

The Following Brief Details Will Help to Visualise The Story of The Church:

NAVE. Quoin stones [masonry blocks at the corner of a wall] at the east end of the south wall of the nave prove that this wall was built before the Early English chancel [c.1180 to 1270] and that the nave was Norman or transition Norman [from Norman to Early English architecture].

The wall below these quoin-stones was disturbed twice, on account of the stairway to the rood-loft. The south windows were altered at least twice since 1752, but remains of the old over-arches are distinct.

CHANCEL. The plain lancet windows in the east end indicate an early stage of Early English, possibly before 1220. It is probable that the chancel of the Norman Church was an apse [a semicircular or polygonal recess, typically found at the eastern end of a church].

TOWER.-The height to the battlements is 99 feet. The pinnacles were restored in 1733 and again in 1925. A stone shield at the top of the third stage bears three lions passant: the royal arms from the time of Richard 1 (1189-1199) until Edward III in 1340 quartered the shield and added fleur-de-lys.

The tower plinth has a concave chamfer, and is larger and higher up than the north aisle plinth, which has a plain chamfer, and is at ground level. The older windows are Decorated [13th century mid 14th century], but the Perpendicular tracery [Gothic, c.1350-1550] in the windows over the west door is modern (1852-3). The pierced stone slab in the lowest window of the tower stairway may have come from an older building.

Four bells were re-cast into six in 1827, and these were re-cast into eight in 1922. The clock was fixed in 1924; the wall is 4ft. 3 inches thick where the clock-shaft passes through it.

Carved figures on the tower include: On the west side, the Saviour above the large window, a group for the Trinity in the south buttress, and probably S. Michael in the north buttress. On the south side a figure in the second stage may be for St. Peter, and in the east buttress possibly a Madonna and Child.

Grotesquely carved animals are on all the buttresses below and above the fourth stage. A figure with a flagon is on the west corner of the north aisle.

SOUTH PORCH. Built in 1725, has a sun-dial dated 1753. A noon-recorder, in the form of a corbel stone in the east wall, is specially interesting. The shadow from the S.E. angle of the porch, when the sun shines, extends at noon from the wall to an oblique groove on this stone.

NORTH AISLE and CHANCEL AISLE. These were added in the Perpendicular period [Gothic architecture that flourished in England from about 1350 to 1550], when the North wall of the nave was removed. The North transept is of later date.

FONT. The Perpendicular font basin is octagonal shape, with window tracery ornament.

SCREENS. A rood-screen of Tudor date extends across the nave and aisle. The canopy was added in 1912. A description of the carving and of the painted figures can be seen near the font. There is a delicately carved parclose screen. Some old carved bench ends are in the North Chapel. Pieces of old coloured glass are inserted in the lancet in the North Chapel. There is a much admired monument window next the rood-screen. An Elizabethan alms chest is in the North Chapel.

There is a much admired monument (1634) above the vestry door, to Judith, daughter of Gabriel Newman, a London goldsmith, wife of Thomas Ivatt, who presented the silver gilt chalice and paten [Eucharist or Holy Communion Cup and Plate] in 1634.

Judith, previously the wife of William Hancock who bought part of the manor was previously the wife of William Hancock, grandson of William Hancock who bought part of the manor property, and whose memorial brass (1587) is opposite the vestry. A large board with the royal arms of King George I is in the church tower [on the wall].

THE ROOF. In 1724 much work was done in the south "ile", and the church and chancel were slated. Then, in 1727, the church was "scaled and beautified." The roof is wagon or cradle shape; and the ceiling is panelled. A mirror is useful for examining the carved bosses at the intersection of the beams. The corbel stones supported timbers of a previous roof.

RECTORS. A list of Rectors from 1309, taken from "Notes on Combe Martin" by Mrs. Kathleen M. Toms, may be seen in the church.

The novelist ["Lorna Doone"] and poet Richard Doddridge Blackmore (1825-1900) was closely associated with Combe Martin. West of the South Porch is the headstone on the grave of Mary Norman, who died 30th January, 1901, aged 38. Mary used to tell how she had looked after R.D. Blackmore, the author of "Lorna Doone", when he was young.

Mary was a daughter of William Radley, a farmer of Charles Parish, and was married in Combe Martin Church on 15th December, 1841, to George Norman.

The Rev. John Blackmore, grandfather of R. D. Blackmore, was Rector of Oare, 1809-1842, and of Combe Martin 1833-1842. He died here on 2nd May, 1842, aged 79, and was buried in the chancel of Charles Church [Plymouth], of which he was Patron. [The second oldest parish church in Plymouth, Devon, Charles Church is now derelict].

His younger son, Richard, Rector of Charles, was married in Combe Martin Church to Ann Quartly [??] on 31st December, 1840, by the Rev. John Blackmore, Junior. The witnesses were Rev. John Blackmore. senior, and M. A. Blackmore (a lady).

There are thus autographs of four Blackmores on that page of the Register. R. D. Blackmore was probably at the wedding at which his father officiated.

The block of interior –or plan– of [St Peter ad Vincula Church](#) was kindly lent to Dr Mahood by Mr. G. F. Beaumont of [Combe Martin](#).

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