

St Giles's Church, Gileston – written in the 1970s for Cowbridge parish magazine

Most visitors to Gileston are impressed by the charm of the setting of the church, sharing as it does the view over the front of the Manor garden to the Bristol Channel and the Somerset coast. They are also impressed by the south door which, as one visitor remarked, 'must be very old'! It is indeed, as it was reputedly hung in 1470 and still has its original lock and key. The original church was probably built about 500 years before this, and saw many events and changes, but few so drastic and exciting as those of the two hundred years following the making of that door.

This was, of course, the time of the Reformation and Henry VIII's repudiation of the Roman Church. In 1534, John Portre signed the Act of Supremacy as Rector of Gileston together with four others from the parish. There seems to have followed a time of great upheaval, for, by 1536, Hugh Jones replaced John Portre and at the same time held the living of Marcross. By 1554 the living was void and the Rector of St Athan acted as Curate of Gileston. He and the Churchwardens testify in that year that in 1552/3 the following had been removed from the church :

A chasuble of redde velvit, a chasuble of white damask, a chasuble of blue saten and likewise 11 crosses of coper, whereof the said Church never hadde any restitution'.

In 1630, John Walter was inducted as Rector, only to be expelled by the Cromwellians in 1648. He was re-instated at the restoration of Charles II in 1660. In the meantime, he saw his successor, William Edwards, ejected in 1649 in favour of Mathew Walter. He did not last long as he was suspended 'for a clandestine marriage with Elinor Price, sister of the Rector of St Athan, who was also suspended for performing the ceremony'.

Since that time, affairs at Gileston have been quiet and eminently respectable! Nowadays there is little to disturb its charm, either from a turbulent past or from the nearby power station which is conveniently hidden by the trees.

by David Williams, of Flemingston and Gileston with St Hilary.