Sainte Apolline's Chapel

2 late 14th century chantry chapel

History of the Chapel

Ste. Apolline's is a rare example of a late 14th century chantry chapel which survives largely in its original form. The first reference to the chapel appears in 1392 and it is believed that the chapel was built shortly before this date by Nicholas Henry. Following the Reformation in the mid 16th century religious services stopped being held at Ste. Apolline's and instead the chapel was used as a stable for a nearby farm. In 1873 Sir Edgar MacCulloch, then Lieutenant Bailiff of Guernsey, persuaded the States of Guernsey to purchase the chapel so that it could be preserved. It became the first structure to be placed in the care of what was then the Ancient Monuments Committee.

Paintings

Ste. Apolline's is one of only two known sites with surviving medieval wall paintings in Guernsey – the other is Castel Parish Church. The paintings are of a high quality and are of considerable significance. Most of the south wall is taken up by painting of the Last Supper, while a second scene just above the south door is thought to depict Christ washing the feet of the Apostles. Above both scenes is a horizontal border, and above this is painted a large scrolling plant, which probably originally covered the entire vault.

Sainte Apolline

The first record of the chapel being dedicated to Sainte Apolline dates to 1452. She is the patron saint of dentists and it is the only chapel or church in the British Isles that is dedicated to her. The window in the north wall of the chapel shows Sainte Apolline being watched by an angel holding a tooth. In Alexandria around AD249 Apolline was punished for refusing to renounce her Christian faith by having her teeth knocked out. She was also threatened with death by burning. In an act of martyrdom she leapt into the fire herself.

'La Chapelle de Ste. Appolisne a St. Sauveur Guernesey' watercolour, by Joshua Gosselin, 1793
Guernsey Museums & Galleries GMAG 1999

The stained glass window depicts Sainte Apolline, the patron saint of dentists.

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