The tiny chapel of St Bartholomew stands in a little grassy field in the lane above the farms and cottages which make up the hamlet of Rodhuish. There has been a settlement here since Saxon times, when it was known as Radhewish, the dwelling place of the Lawman or Councillor (the same "rede" or "rad" as in the name of Ethelred the Unready).

The present structure dates from the Fifteenth Century, when it was built, or possibly rebuilt on the site of an earlier chapel, as a chapel of ease to the parish church at Carhampton. The balance of population was then much less uneven - in 1563 Radhuish held 28 households to Carhampton's 60.

The chapel comprises a nave and chancel, the latter slightly lower and narrower than the former, with a western bell-tower (1) rising from within the body of the nave, with four small openings in its otherwise plain walls, and there is a small porch on the south side. It is constructed of roughcast masonry over a rubble core, with a roof of Treborough slate. The exterior is limewashed. The original windows were remodelled in the Sixteenth Century. The whole building was restored once in 1826, and again in 1924. Since then it has been faithfully maintained by successive generations of worshippers, who are now in the throes of another comprehensive and expensive restoration.

Inside, the chancel is covered by an open arch-braced wagon-roof. The slightly wider roof over the nave has three arch-braced bays, with two trusses, tie-beams and kingposts. There is gallery (2) over the western end, enclosing the base of the tower, with dark Eighteenth Century wooden panelling. The plain pine pews were installed in the mid Nineteenth Century.
and the altar frontal are embroidered in "Winchester work" executed at the same time as the angels by Beatrice Mary Reckitt.

The wrought-iron altar rails date from the Nineteenth Century, and come from Weston-super-mare. The whole combines intimacy and dignity in a most charming way.

There is more sculpture by Rachel Reckitt and iron work by James Horrobin in the sanctuary fittings, dating from the early 1970s.

The chapel is referred to by Penelope Lively in her book "A House Unlocked" (2001), where she recalls decorating the church for festivities with her grandmother, the same Beatrice Mary Reckitt who did the embroidery in the sanctuary, the young Penelope herself decorating the pulpit.

In front of the base of the tower stands the sturdy Norman circular pedestal font (3), which was brought here from Carhampton some time in the Nineteenth Century.

Despite its small size, the sanctuary has all the fittings to be found in a much larger church. Behind the altar (4) is a curtain hung on riddle rails, which come forward at the sides to provide a screen from draughts. These extensions of the rails are tipped with delightful trumpet-blowing angels carved in walnut by Rachel Reckitt in 1955. Curtains

How To Get There:

From the A39 between Washford and Carhampton take any of the turnings south sign-posted Withycombe. Pass south through Withycombe and on up into the foothills of the Brendons. The chapel lies on the loop of road between the two lanes running south, above a small lay-by.