

# ST. PETER'S CHURCH COCKFIELD

CHURCH GUIDE  
AND SHORT HISTORY  
OF THE VILLAGE AND CHURCH



St Peter's Church, Cockfield,  
Guide and Short History  
of the Village and Church

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# ST. PETER'S CHURCH COCKFIELD

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A Guide to the Parish Church of St Peter, Cockfield,  
and a Short History  
of the Village and its Church

The Cockfield Parochial Church Council



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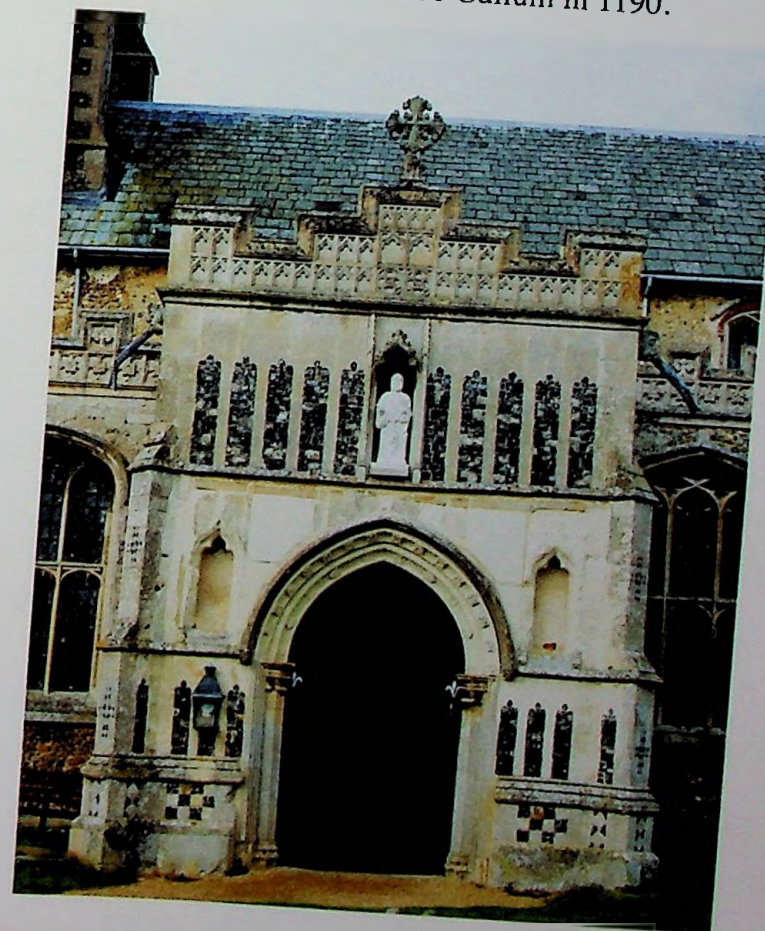
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## ST PETER'S CHURCH, COCKFIELD

Welcome to our church. We thank you for visiting us and hope that you enjoy looking at our lovely place of worship. Most of the present church was built in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries. Although there are no records of an earlier building, the list of Rectors of Cockfield begins with William de Cullum in 1190.



*The statue of St Peter was placed in the niche in 2011 by friends and parishioners in memory of Mrs. Luanne Stockvell, a long-term resident of the village, who loved this church and served it so well.*



## A WALK AROUND THE CHURCH

### INSIDE

#### THE NAVE

Standing with one's back to the tower and looking east, one is immediately aware of the light, grace and beautiful proportions of the building. The roof was described by J. Draycott Wyatt in 1848 as 'of pure decorated (14<sup>th</sup> century), ...of a good pitch with tie beams and king posts with mouldings...beautifully enriched by rosettes'. The mouldings remain but the red and blue paint which brightened the roof at that time is no more. It is probable that the original roof was put back after the church was heightened in order to install the clerestory windows, which are of a later date than the roof itself. These windows are perpendicular in style, but are unusual in that instead of two windows over each arch, there is one window over each pillar. Two were 'made at the cost and charge' of the will of John Hersent in 1509.



*the nave, looking east*

Moving down the central aisle one passes pews modelled on what remains from those of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. The fleur-de-lis shaped pew ends are called 'Poppy Heads', deriving from the French word for puppet. In many churches the shapes are of heads of people or animals.



*pews*

The stem of the very fine slender stem pulpit is earlier than the 15<sup>th</sup> century and was once much higher. The rest of the pulpit is Jacobean (17<sup>th</sup> century). One side is plain while the others are carved. Records show that the pulpit stood against a pillar on the north side of the aisle until the early part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The steps of the pulpit were originally curved but were altered in 1874.



*left –  
the lectern,  
looking  
south west*



*right –  
the pulpit,  
looking  
north east.  
This has now  
been moved  
back to rest  
against the  
wall*

On the other side of the chancel steps stands the lectern, which incorporates an interesting quadruple twist stem, which is clearly older than the top or base. This was perhaps part of earlier altar rails.



## THE CHANCEL

Like the nave, the chancel is 14<sup>th</sup> century, but the roof was probably raised to provide additional height in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. The chancel is the most important part of the church as worship is focused on the altar under the east window. It would have once been entered through a Rood screen so called because it was surmounted by a Rood or Crucifix. Many of these screens were removed during the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries because they were seen as restricting the access of ordinary people to worship. There is no sign of the Rood Screen which was here but the doorway leading to the staircase, which gave access to the Rood Loft, can be seen in the north east corner of the south aisle. Henry Hyldryerd's will of 1483 left 3s.4d. for the 'steyer' making of the 'RoodeLofte' in Cockfield Church.



*door to the rood loft stair*



*the 15th century choir stalls*



*detail of the stalls*

The choir stalls are very fine and the first two on either side were made about the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century and have misericords; narrow seats which could be used for resting upon while standing during long services. They are usually richly carved but here the carvings have been defaced and removed, probably during the Puritan movement of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. It is very unusual to find misericords in a village church and may reflect the involvement of Cockfield Church with the mighty abbey at Bury St. Edmunds.

Originally these old stalls faced the altar on either side of the then narrow entrance to the chancel which would have been through the rood screen.

They were lined up opposite each other when the new altar, containing the old stone mensa, was installed in the early 1960's.

On the north wall of the chancel there is a marble memorial to four members of the Harvey family who acquired Peppers Hall from the Spring family in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The bust, by Royce of Bury St. Edmunds, is of James Harvey. The translations of the inscriptions on the memorial make interesting reading and are included later in this guide.

One of the most important features of the church is the very fine 14<sup>th</sup> century triple canopied Easter Sepulchre which is to the north of the Sanctuary – the area around the altar. Each Easter the medieval church made a presentation of Our Lord's entombment with great ceremony. The Host (bread and wine) and the Crucifix were transferred to the Easter Sepulchre where a vigil was maintained from Good Friday to Easter morning.

The sepulchre is also the tomb of Sir John Howard, Knight. The tomb is described in a 16<sup>th</sup> century manuscript as 'a toambe under a wall arched of a Knight Howd (Howard) of Sutton Hall.... He was slain by his servauntes'. The armorial shields on the front of the tomb have been blacked out. As the tomb was intended for use as an Easter Sepulchre, it has no effigy.



*the Harvey family memorial*

*the Sir John Howard tomb and Easter Sepulchre*



The altar is modern but contains the remains of an ancient stone mensa found in the floor of the tower (it was probably moved there for safety during the Reformation). The original altar rails were Jacobean and were arranged on three sides of the altar, but they were ripped out, probably by Puritan supporters. In 1641 it was recorded that 'the altar rails were tumultuously and violently pulled up and broke in pieces by a company of profane and wicked fellows gathered together out of several towns neare about'. They were eventually replaced following repeated orders by the Bishop, firstly in 1682 and then in October 1683, when it was noted that the 'rayles are not as yet set up'.



On the south side of the sanctuary there is a piscina and sedilia. Both the sedilia – where the celebrant, deacon and sub-deacon sat – and the piscina are 14<sup>th</sup> century and were once canopied, but the canopy was broken when the window above was enlarged, along with the two windows above the choir stalls, in the perpendicular style of the day. The coloured borders in the windows are of painted glass dating from the early 15<sup>th</sup> century. The window above the Easter Sepulchre is a perfect example of the decorated style and was probably raised to its present position when the vestry was built.



*the sanctuary  
piscina  
and  
sedilia range*

*the east  
window  
(exterior view)  
showing  
the fine  
decorated  
tracery*



The east end window above the altar is a memorial to the Reverend Churchill Babington who died in 1889 after doing so much to restore the fabric of the church. It was designed by Kempe and shows scenes from the story of the Resurrection of Our Lord. The main lights are as follows:

1. The confession of Thomas
- 2 & 3 Our Lord's charge to Peter on the seashore
4. The supper at Emmaus
5. Peter and John at the Sepulchre
- 6 & 7 The women at the Sepulchre
8. Our Lord with Mary Magdelene in the garden
9. Mary and John return from Calvary
10. The descent from the Cross
11. Within the Sepulchre
12. The soldiers guarding the Sepulchre

On the south wall of the Chancel there are memorials to two former Rectors.



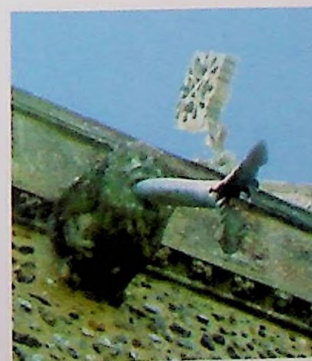
*vestry, showing the chancel buttresses*

## THE VESTRY

The vestry, entered by a door in the north wall of the sanctuary, was added after the church was built, almost destroying the two buttresses on the external north wall. In 1468 Thomas Forthe bequeathed a sum of money to build a vestry (vestibulum), i.e. the price of the stone, on condition that the parishioners are willing to find 'le tymbre'. The door leading to the vestry is considered to be very old. There has been much speculation about the original use of the vestry. There are clear indications that it might have been a chapel with an upper story to provide a cell for an acolyte priest.

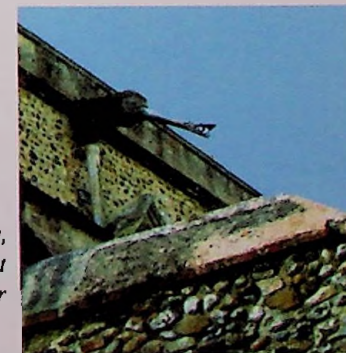
Inside the vestry there are stone corbels to support an upper floor lit by a window, the outline of which can still be seen.

There is also a chimney and fireplace, recently restored. The occupant of the room would have been able to see church services from this room, as there was a hagioscope or squint in the south wall above the Harvey memorial. At ground level on the south wall of the vestry there is a piscina indicating the site of an altar.



*a gargoyle  
near  
the vestry*

*detail of vestry,  
north east  
corner*





## THE NORTH AISLE

The north aisle, with its lovely plain roof with carved rosettes, is the oldest part of the church, having been built in the early 14<sup>th</sup> century. One of the first things to strike the visitor is the presence of two fountains. The one at the west end is 14<sup>th</sup> century but much mutilated and cut down, possibly by Puritans to remove any 'scandalous' decoration. The one at the east end is 19<sup>th</sup> century and was designed by Fawcett to match the size and shape of the original font. It is inscribed with a quotation from St. Peter's first epistle, 'Baptism doth also now save us not the putting away the filth of the flesh but the answer of good conscience towards God'. It is decorated with cockerels, possibly in reference to the name of the village, but more likely to the words spoken by Jesus to St Peter, that before the cock would crow Peter would deny him three times. A 14<sup>th</sup> century door, found in the tower, is displayed behind the older font.



*the 14th century font at the west of the church and 14th century door. The old boards detailing the ancient charities of Cockfield hang either side of the recess.*



*12th century aumbry recess*

There is evidence of an older church in the north aisle. The 12<sup>th</sup> century aumbry in the east wall suggests that an altar was situated nearby, as an aumbry was the place where the Blessed Sacrament was kept.

The remains of a piscina on a pillar on the nave arcade beside it provides further evidence that there may have been an altar here, as a piscina was used by priests to wash the sacred vessels. The distinctive carving on the aumbry (described in 'Suffolk Churches' as cusped head and carved spandrels) has caused some to think that it came from a secular building, but is it more likely that it is the only significant remnant of an older church.

The east window of the north aisle contains a memorial to Mr Maurice Eyres, of the British Consular service. It was designed by Mrs Everett and erected in 1964. The other windows in the north aisle are perfect examples of the 14<sup>th</sup> century decorated style matching that above the Easter Sepulchre.

On the wall of the north aisle there are two important records. One is of the people of Cockfield who gave their lives in the service of their country during the two world wars of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The other is a list of Rectors of the parish since records began.

## THE SOUTH AISLE

The architecture of the south aisle is 15<sup>th</sup> century perpendicular. The roof is a fine example of that period, with beautifully carved scroll foliage. The pattern of the beams suggest that there was a small separate chapel, possibly a chantry chapel, at the east end. Two beams bear the dates of restorations; one in 1673 and another in 1795. The altar is 17<sup>th</sup> century and was moved to its present position when the new one housing the mensa took its place in the sanctuary. Until then the organ had occupied this south east corner. The windows contain fragments of medieval glass which have been gathered from other parts of the church. In the south east window there are two larger fragments, the lower one showing St Anne teaching the Blessed Virgin Mary to read.



*top – south aisle, left – north aisle roof, centre – south aisle roof, right – Minton tiles*



## THE FLOOR

The floor of the church is paved with Minton tiles, part of the Victorian restoration. It was originally made of brick, interspersed with flat tombstones. Fortunately some stones were moved to the floor of the tower, but many have been covered and other items, including brasses, were lost.

## THE TOWER

Looking west, two buttresses can be seen supporting the tower from the inside, which is unusual. One theory suggests that the tower already existed before the nave was built.

Records show that a 'singing' gallery was situated in the tower, together with the Royal coat of arms. The gallery was probably removed in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century as it was in a poor state of repair.

The organ nearby was built by Bevington and Sons of London in 1887 and cost £164.5s including delivery by rail to Cockfield Station! It had to be renovated in 2006 when the opportunity was taken to raise it to leave space for kitchen and toilet facilities below. The screen from the chancel, which was removed in the 1960's when the choir stalls were turned, was utilised for the gallery and a new door made to go underneath.



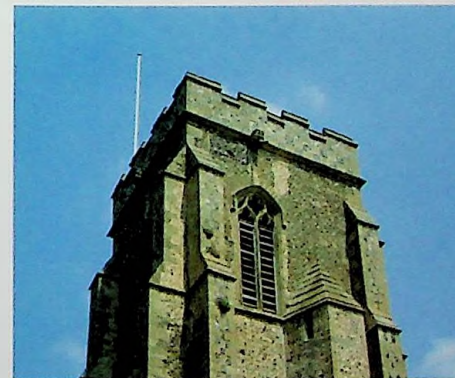
*internal tower buttresses and organ*

On the floor of the tower, just inside the west door, are several interesting tombstones which must have been removed there for their safety during various restorations. It was here that the altar mensa was found.

There are six bells, four of which are rung today. The four lightest bells are hung stationary in a wooden frame and can be sounded by a chiming mechanism. The fifth and sixth are damaged and rest mouth downwards on top of the wooden frame.

The particulars of the bells are as follows:

Treble:	Uninscribed	1843, 5 cwt
Second:	'CHARLES NEWMAN MADE MEE 1700'	1700, 5 cwt
Third	'GH HTS CHARLES NEWMAN MADE MEE 1699'	1699, 6 cwt
Fourth:	'MILES GRAY 1656'	1656, 9 cwt
Fifth:	'IAMES EDVRC 1608'	1608, 11 cwt
Tenor:	'*IOHN IOWERS * ROBT DEBENHAM * C * W * THO * GARDINER * FECIT * 1721 * NUM = 126*' (John Jowers of Cockfield Hall was churchwarden at that time). 1721, 15 cwt	



*the upper stages of the tower, showing the louvred openings which allow the sound of the bells to be heard for miles around; and William Ludlam's filled-in windows*

## OUTSIDE

### THE SOUTH PORCH

We leave the church by the 15<sup>th</sup> century south porch, perpendicular in style, with lovely flintwork and carving (see illustration on page 5). The doorway through which we pass however, is much older than the porch and must have been moved from an earlier position before the south aisle was built. To the left by the door as we leave the church there is the stoup where worshippers would dip their fingers into the holy water before making the sign of the Cross on entry to the church. Now flowers are arranged there each week in memory of the people of Cockfield who died in the two world wars.



The porch must have been in place by 1525 because John Campe (Rector 1489 – 1525) wished to be buried there. Incidentally, he also instructed his executors to ‘call upon two windows to be made and furnished in the south aisle’, and charged them to make the painting of the chancel roof with ‘three colours well and perfectly finished according to the bargain made with Cuttynge’.

Turning left and walking towards the east end of the church, look up and note the rich carving on the parapet and the changed pattern of carving at the eastern end, which gives further evidence that there was probably a chantry chapel at this point. In the angle of south aisle and chancel the brick casting of the rood loft steps can be seen. The small quatrefoil is perhaps the only remaining part of the original case. Further on, some very good 14<sup>th</sup> century niches can be seen in the outside of the chancel wall. It is interesting to speculate about the statues which once occupied them. Above there is an elaborate cornice beneath the parapet. The very fine Early English (13<sup>th</sup> century) priest’s door leading to the chancel is also particularly noteworthy, as are the spectacular gargoyles from the parapet.



*chancel –  
early English  
priest’s door*



*chancel –  
14th century niche*

## THE TOWER

The square flint tower, described by H Munro Cautley in ‘Suffolk Churches’ as being of noble size, is 14<sup>th</sup> century and is buttressed almost up to the top. In the hard winter of 1774-5 the tower was almost destroyed by a violent storm. On 2<sup>nd</sup> August 1775, when the repairs were nearly completed, the tower was apparently struck by lightning, set on fire, and again much damaged.

The pair of filled-in windows at the very top are interesting. These were put in by a former Rector, William Ludlam, a mathematician of some repute and a keen astronomer, who came to Cockfield in 1767. He constructed an observatory at the top of the church tower. The windows were installed to ‘make possibler the passage of a transit instrument (telescope)’. At some time later the openings were filled in but the recesses were left on the outside. They were filled with flint at the time of the restoration of the tower in 1906. The flagstaff was erected in memory of Nicholas Slater of Buttons Green, who was killed in a flying accident in 1995 while serving with the RAF.

## CHURCHYARD

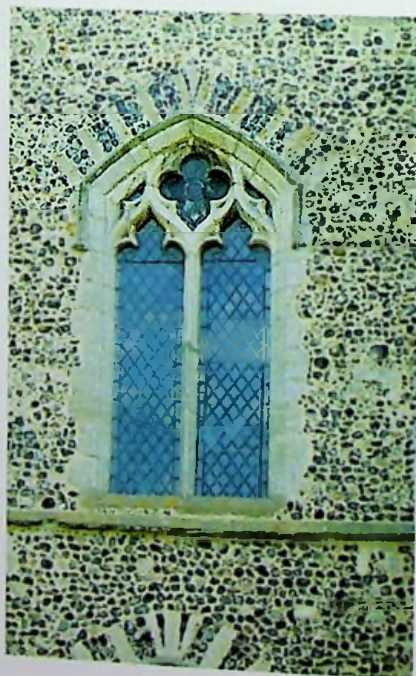
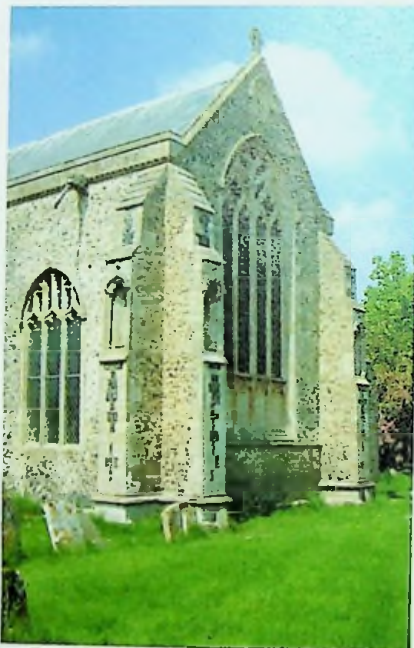


*the churchyard,  
chancel and the  
south aisle, showing  
the parapet, with its  
rich carving, and the  
external casing of  
the rood stair.*

In the churchyard there are memorials to many of the old Cockfield families; Goshawke, King, Langham and Ruffell to name but a few. There are also two curious headstones on which can be found the outlines of a skull and crossbones. The oldest grave found, dated 1695, is a flat slab in the corner between the east end of the south aisle and Chancel wall. In 1984, the Women’s Institute undertook a churchyard survey which recorded every grave with its full inscription (where readable). This is now lodged in the West Suffolk Record Office.

Before you go, please spend a few moments in contemplation of the men and women who have worked so hard to preserve this fine building over the past eight centuries, and those who strive to continue this good work today. This church, dedicated to St Peter, was built to the glory of God and His worship and is still used every week for that purpose.





## APPENDIXES

### 1. THE HARVEY MEMORIAL

#### Translation of the inscriptions

On the right hand side:

'In this church are deposited the remains of the Reverend CALTHORPE HARVEY M.A. late Rector of the parishes of Lawshall and Acle, a man distinguished for his Learning, Benevolence and Piety, most dear to all who knew him, both friends and relatives: and by those over whose eternal salvation he watched deserving the greatest respect and held in the greatest devotion. He was a pastor who was never less than faithful in fulfilling all the charges of his church, and more happily, still dedicated to them all his efforts and his mind. He applied himself unstintingly through private advice and public discourse, and with complete integrity of morals, he showed his flock the way which leads to blessed immortality. He died the 19<sup>th</sup> November 1767. Aged 82.'

On the plinth below the bust:

'The effigy of JAMES HARVEY, Fellow commoner of Clare College, Cambridge. If Sculptor, you have dared to do less than justice to this young man, how much more distinguished is the mind which is to be delineated! He was lively of intellect, with the best of talents and great sweetness of manner. He was no mean scholar of languages, both Greek and Latin, endowed with academic knowledge beyond his years. He applied himself assiduously to the arts in which he took an interest, yet was not anxious for gain. He would have equipped himself through advanced studies of English law to fit him to serve his country. Then, alas, with a long farewell having pursued his academic studies, he returned home, a victim of the disease of smallpox. Our hopes were lost with him. 9<sup>th</sup> June AD1723 in the 20<sup>th</sup> year of his age.'

On the left hand side below:

'In a tomb in the adjoining cemetery lies JAMES FRANCIS HARVEY of COCKFIELD, son of a gentleman, learned in the law and Recorder of Colchester.'



He took to wife Cecilia, one of the daughters of that Edmund Waller who distinguished as a poet before all his contemporaries. When she died, he married Elizabeth, whose father was Thomas Beriffe Esquire, and whose mother Damaris was a member of the ancient family of Carey. The children of Cecilia long ago followed their mother, and Elizabeth's only son, whose living image you see, (such was the will of God) predeceased her. He called him after his Father who wasted away after four long years of illness mourning the loss of his beloved son. He died 14<sup>th</sup> April 1728 aged 69.'

In the centre:

'Next to the remains of her beloved son rests ELIZABETH, wife of JAMES HARVEY, a lady most distinguished for virtue, prudence and piety worshipping God without pretence, generously aiding the poor without any show; a pattern of obedience and love towards her husband, and unfailingly kind to her husband's relatives both living and dead, to whom she returned his family inheritance, left to her both, faithfully and in a most praiseworthy manner (he knew who he could trust). She undertook the task of caring for her mother, more than eighty years of age; she looked after her at great cost, watched over her and delighted in her, but chose to abandon the many ills of those surviving their loved ones rather than be parted any longer from her son, and on the same day that he was torn from her, ceased to live. She died on the 19<sup>th</sup> April AD 1734 aged 55.'

## 2. THE BELLS

The treble was cast at Whitechapel Foundry, London. Charles Newman, an itinerant founder from Kings Lynn, cast the second and third. The fourth bell is the work of Miles Graye (the Younger) of Colchester, whose father cast the celebrated Lavenham tenor. James Edbury, who cast the fifth bell, was a Bury St. Edmunds founder. His work is not considered to be very good. Only seven bells cast by him alone were extant in Suffolk in 1890 (when Dr. Raven made his survey), and there were then three which he cast jointly with three other founders. The inscription on this bell reads from right to left, part of which is upside down and the figures are in the wrong order. It was meant to read James Edbury 1608. The tenor bell is one of over 100 which existed in Suffolk in 1890 cast by Thomas Gardiner of Sudbury.

## 3. CHURCH REGISTERS

The Church Registers, now lodged in the West Suffolk Record Office at Bury St. Edmunds, date from 1561. Among the many entries of baptisms, marriages and burials the entries for 1666, 'the sickness year', are particularly interesting. They show that Cockfield did not escape the ravages of the Plague which swept the country at this time as, 'Betweene the 5<sup>th</sup> of July and the 21<sup>st</sup> of August following these (eighteen) persons were buried'. Later on there are 59 others entered separately during the year. The average number of burials in the ten preceding years was 12. Another entry of particular note is that written by John Smythe, Curate. 'NB This year, an Act passed imposing a Tax of threepence on all Births or Christenings: and ye same on Burials, except of paupers or such as receive Relief of ye Parish.' This tax commenced on October 1783. Hence the word pauper was often added from this date. From 1783 to 1812 women's maiden names are added. The WSRO also houses a copy of the 'NADFAS Church Furnishing Record', completed during 2002.



nave – roof and clerestory windows.

*Crown post roofs of this size are very rare in Suffolk as most churches were given newer and grander ones when the buildings were heightened*



## A SHORT HISTORY OF COCKFIELD AND ST. PETER'S CHURCH

### COCKFIELD

Cockfield can trace its history back over at least two millennia. The finding of a bronze-age sword, now in Moyse Hall Museum, Bury St. Edmunds, indicates pre-Roman habitation, and Roman coins, a bronze bust, tiles, bricks and a part of a Roman encampment, known as the Warbanks, clearly indicate that Roman legionaries were established here, and that Roman citizens made Cockfield their home.

The name Cockfield, however, is Anglo Saxon, coming from Cocham-feld probably meaning a settlement established by someone named Cocham, in the period following the end of the Roman occupation. A recent interpretation has suggested that it did mean 'a field of cocks' and would be referring to a woodcock, a source of food. By 1086 Cockfield, referred to as Cothefeld, is important enough to be included in the Domesday Survey carried out by William the Conqueror. This shows Cockfield as a prosperous manor, held by the Abbot of St. Edmunds, whose prosperity had increased even further in the 20 years since the Norman Conquest.

### THE MANORS

Cockfield remained in the possession of the Abbot of St. Edmunds until the Reformation and dissolution of the monasteries by Henry VIII in the mid 16<sup>th</sup> century. Over the years its name changed to Cokefield and then to Cockfield. At one time the village comprised four manors. The oldest, Cockfield Hall is first mentioned in 967 when the Lord of the Manor Earl Algar, bequeathed it to his daughter, and she subsequently bequeathed it to the Abbot of St. Edmunds in 1002, who held it until the Reformation when it became owned by the Spring family, the wealthy clothiers of Lavenham. The second manor, Earls Hall, is first mentioned in 1086 when it too was owned by the Abbot of St. Edmunds who granted it to the De Vere family, the Earls of Oxford, and hence its name. The strong ties with the very powerful De Vere family must have enhanced the importance of Cockfield. The two other manors, both owned by the Spring family latterly, were the manor of Peper's – Peppers Hall, probably then on the site of Old Hall, and the Manor of Butlers, and thought to be the origin of the name of Buttons Green.

Following the breaking up of the great properties of the De Vere family in the latter part of the 16<sup>th</sup> Century, and of the Spring family about the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the lands of Cockfield have changed hands frequently. Few of the landowners were resident in the village.

Records of the time of the Tithe Award in 1843, when there were several non-resident landowners in Cockfield, also show that there were 22 farmers, five professionals, six pubs or beer houses, four grocers, three shoemakers, two blacksmiths, two wheelwrights, a saddler and a cattle dealer in the village. The only country gentleman's seat in the parish from the 17<sup>th</sup> century onwards appears to have been Peppers Hall. The Ruffell family, owners of Peppers Hall since 1937 and of Clift Bushes for over four hundred years, have the longest record as resident owners of land in Cockfield. There are also several other families in Cockfield today who have lived in the village for many generations.

### ST PETER'S CHURCH

The Domesday Survey makes no reference to a church in Cockfield though there was bound to be one in a village of this size. It is very likely that a church at Cockfield, probably on the same site as the present one, was among the fifty or so Suffolk churches which existed, but were not recorded at the time of the Domesday Survey in 1086.

The first records we have of a church at Cockfield comes from the appointment of William de Cullum as Rector in 1190, and the Crown Patent Rolls of 4<sup>th</sup> May 1212 which show that when William de Cullum resigned in 1212, Henry de Vere was presented to the church at Cockfield. William de Cullum, Henry de Vere and their successors were appointed to St. Peter's Church at Cockfield by the Abbot of St. Edmunds until the time of the Reformation. Subsequently, appointments to the living were made by the Spring family and, from 1708, by St John's College, Cambridge.

The patronage of the wealthy Spring family resulted in a close relationship between the wool trade and St Peter's. The parish registers, which date from 1561, include one volume of 'burials in woollen' when families were being paid to bury their dead in woollen shrouds as a boost to the then dwindling wool trade. There is also a possibility that Lady Dorothy Spring was buried at St. Peter's. Her burial is recorded in the church register on the 10<sup>th</sup> April 1564 and it is possible that the Chantry Chapel was built for her - the two windows on the se corner are a slightly different height from the others in that aisle (which were probably the two paid for by John Campe a few years earlier), and the pattern on the parapet outside on that corner also varies from the rest.

Many early rectors were men of great learning, even before the patronage by St. John's College, which led to many distinguished Fellows of the College being appointed. Among them was Presbyterian John Knewstub who was a spokesman at the Hampton Court Conference in 1604.



In spite of his non-conformity, he was well loved and remained Rector until his death at the age of 80 in 1624. Others were William Ludlam, the eminent mathematician, who was also a keen astronomer, hence the windows at the top of the tower. Another was Dr Churchill Babington, archeologist and botanist.

## THE CHURCH BUILDING

The present church contains very little which is earlier than the early 14<sup>th</sup> century, but most authorities agree that it has an earlier medieval foundation with alterations and additions being made over the years.

The interior of the church has lost a great deal of colour over the years. There is evidence that, as in many medieval churches, the walls were once decorated with frescoes which would have probably been brightly coloured. The windows were also bright with stained glass. Many were decorated up to the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century with coats of arms of the De Vere, Spring and many other notable local families, together with pictures of saints and religious emblems. The roof was also beautifully painted. In 1848 J. Drayton Wyatt describes the more prominent mouldings in the nave roof as being painted red and the hollows blue. Above these on the plain face of each side of the beam, were painted a series of Quarterfoils in circles, the pattern being in white and the background in blue. The king posts with their well-moulded caps were painted. The alternate faces of the shafts were painted with a succession of arrow zigzags, traces of this pattern also appeared on other roof timbers. The other faces of the king post shafts were painted a plain vermillion.

Many of the very fine roof carvings remain, but many others have been removed or defaced. Statues have been removed from niches, carved fifteenth century pews were scattered. The date of the removal of the altar rails in 1641 suggests that the destruction was a result of the Puritan movement in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Puritanism was particularly active in Suffolk. William Dowsing, born at Laxfield near Framlingham, was appointed as Parliamentary Visitor of the Suffolk Churches. He carried out a crusade of destruction in Suffolk destroying much of the legacy of the Middle Ages in many of our churches.

But, as Rev. Churchill Babington, Rector of Cockfield from 1866 to 1889, observed on his arrival, destruction in various forms continued for the next two centuries. 'Some', he wrote, 'even during the last half century'. By then little of the colour and stained glass which had been praised 20 years earlier, existed.

A programme of 'restoration' appears to have been at least partly responsible. For instance, on his arrival Churchill Babington was given fragments of painted glass, 'packed in a confused mass in a basket' which had come from the recently re-glazed north aisle windows. These he passed on to a Mr Constable of Cambridge to 'do the best that he could do with them'. Some fragments were placed, along with modern glass, into the edgings of the windows in the south aisle and in the quatrefoil of one of the west windows, and he was able to reconstruct the two vignettes in the south aisle window. The frescoes on the walls were also painted over as part of the same programme of restoration.

However, some damage also occurred as result of natural causes. In 1775 the new work on the tower 'which had been almost destroyed by a violent storm... last winter, was beat down...by a violent storm of thunder and lightning'.

The Rev. Churchill Babington embarked upon an extensive programme of work and repair, much of which occurred in 1879, under the supervision of a Mr Fawcett of Cambridge, to whom he pays much tribute for his 'clever' restoration of many of the features and furnishings of the church.

The Rectors, Churchwardens and the Parochial Church Councils of recent years have continued to take their responsibility for the care and maintenance of this beautiful parish church very seriously. Repairs and renewals to the fabric are a constant requirement and drain on the resources of this small community. As the 20<sup>th</sup> century closed, a major project of restoration and renewal was completed on the tower and clerestory in the north aisle, and as we moved into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the restoration of the very fine 15<sup>th</sup> century porch was undertaken. A few years later Dr. Simon Hill instigated the reconfiguration of the west end and the installation of running water.



## GLOSSARY

**Aisle** – extensions to the north or south of the nave or chancel to provide more accommodation. The arches separating the aisle from the main building often indicate the original position of the outer walls.

**Architectural Periods** – the dating of medieval churches relies upon the recognition of the architectural style of the construction. Each period has its own special character, but there is an overlap of several years at each change. Most churches have been changed over the centuries in different styles. The earliest buildings are **Saxon**, 7th century to 1066, when the **Norman** style comes with the conquest. The **Gothic** styles follow with **Early English** starting in the late 12th century. The changeover period between **Romanesque** and **Gothic** is known as **Transitional**. The **Decorated** period began in the late 13th century and continued until about 1350, when the **Perpendicular** style began. This continued until the major change to the **Classical** Style during the 17th century. Cockfield church is mainly in the Perpendicular style, but some important Decorated work remains. There is a fine Classical monument in the chancel.

**Aumbry** – a wall cupboard close to an altar for ritual vessels. An **aumbry** is often found near the site of a former side altar.

**Chancel** – this is the eastern section of the church, usually divided from the **nave** (the western part) by a chancel arch. The area containing the altar itself, often behind a **sanctuary rail**, is called the **sanctuary**.

**Chantry** – chapel, often forming part of a aisle, where Mass was said, often for the souls of wealthy benefactors. Chantry chapels can be separate buildings.

**Choir** – the choir is the western part of the chancel, which often contains **stalls**, usually richly decorated, which provide seating for the clergy. **Choir stalls** provide seating for singers.

**Font** – bowl supported on a stand for holding the holy water for the sacrament of baptism.

**Gargoyle** – projecting stone water spout to throw rainwater away from walls, often grotesquely carved.

**Lectern** – a floor mounted book stand for the Bible.

**Misericord** – a bracket, often richly carved, on the underside of a hinged seat to give support when standing.

**Nave** – the main body of a church, to the west of the **chancel**, where the congregation is housed.

**Piscina** – a niche with an inset stone basin and drain, close to the site of an altar, where vessels and the hands of priests could be washed.

**Poppyhead** – a decorative carving surmounting the ends of pews.

**Pulpit** – an elevated, railed platform for preachers.

**Rood** – crucifix; the **rood screen** divided the nave from the chancel across the chancel arch. The Cockfield screen has gone, but they survive in a few churches. Most **rood lofts** (which surmount the screen and support figures representing the Crucifixion of Christ) were destroyed at the Reformation. The rood loft was accessed by means of a narrow spiral stair, often cut into a pillar, as here at Cockfield, where the staircase remains.

**Sedillia** – graduated stone seating for clergy, cut into the wall of the chancel, often surmounted by elaborately carved stone canopies.