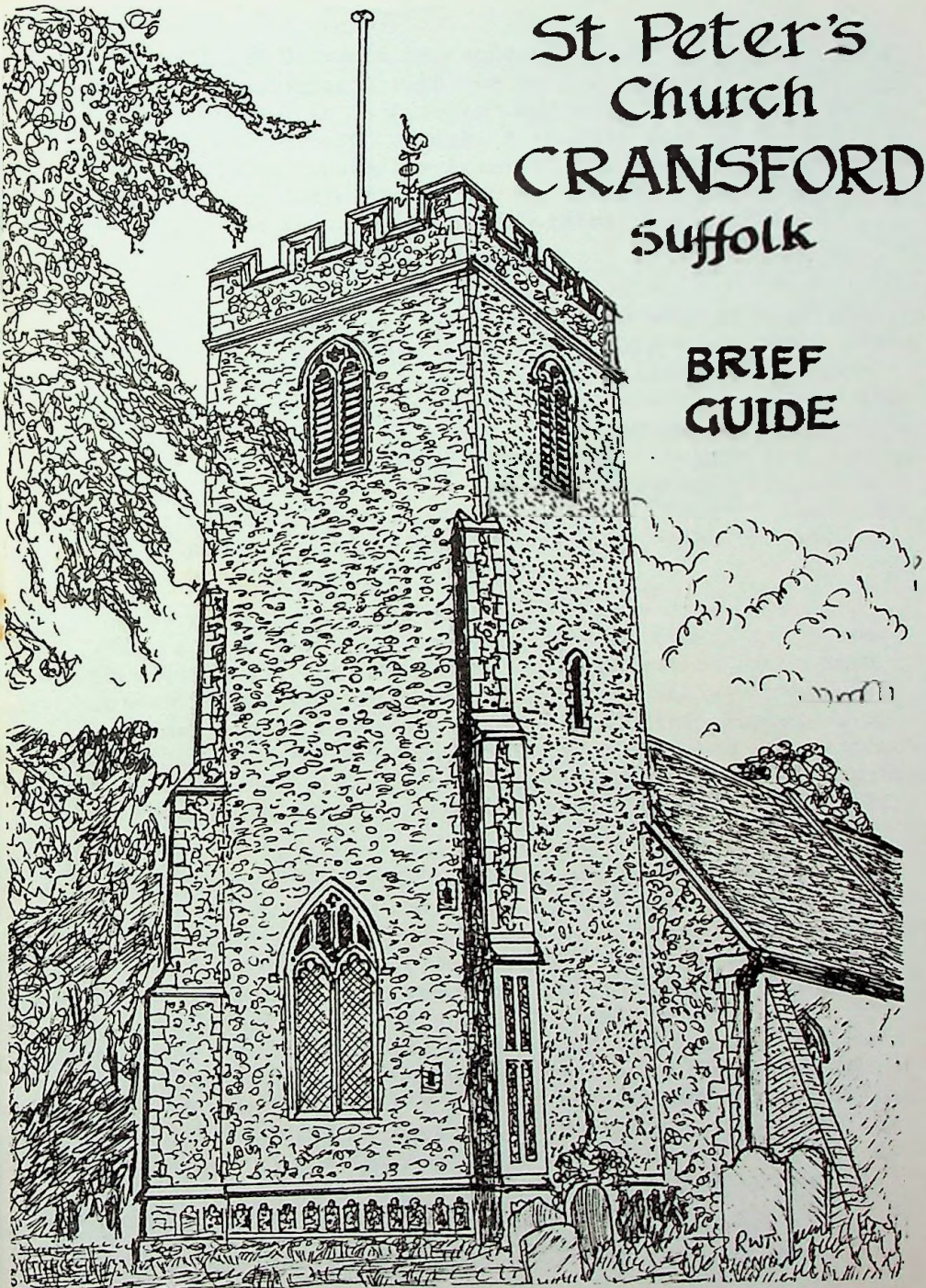


St. Peter's
Church
CRANSFORD
Suffolk

BRIEF
GUIDE



W E L C O M E to this ancient church, which is small and humble compared with the many great churches for which Suffolk is famous, and may well be described as a rather "ordinary" church. A careful look at this House of God, which has been in constant use for Christian worship for over 700 years, will soon show that there is no such thing as an "ordinary" church!

HOW THE CHURCH DEVELOPED OVER THE CENTURIES.

The Domesday Book of 1087 records the name of a priest called Godric at Cransford, so presumably there was a church here at this early date, although no evidence of it survives in the present building. During the 13th century the living of Cransford was under the patronage and care of the Cistercian Abbey at Sibton. It is possible that the core of the nave and chancel may well be 13th century, because a lancet window from that period survives. Most of the original windows date from the 15th century, when the western tower was added.

Much of what we see inside St. Peter's dates from the 19th century and very little remains to remind us of how the church was adorned before the Reformation, when much colour and carving in benches, windows, walls, screen, etc., provided a host of visual aids to teach the people; or during the 17th and 18th centuries, when churches were fitted with box-pews, large pulpits, Royal Arms and other trappings of the "plain and Prayer Book" worship of the Established Church.

The notes of David Elisha Davy, who paid several visits to the church during the first half of the 19th century, give us some idea of what it was like before its restoration by the Victorians. He noted in 1807 that the Communion Table was raised upon two steps and enclosed with a "rail and banister". The nave and chancel roofs were hidden by plaster ceilings and the chancel was divided from the nave by a "heavy" screen. Could this have been the mediaeval rood screen, or possibly a later screen, maybe erected in the 17th century? It seems that the space between the top of the screen and the ceiling was filled with timber and plaster, upon which was placed the Royal Arms, also the Lord's Prayer, Creed and Commandments.

When Davy returned in 1831, he noted that the external

buttresses were of "modern" red brick and the walls were covered with plaster rendering. At this time the tower, which had no embattled parapet, was capped by a tiled pyramid roof and the porch was constructed mostly of lath and plaster. A further visit in 1839 gives more details of the interior, where some alterations had been made. The altarpiece (the reredos or panelling behind the altar) had been removed from the east wall and brought forward a few feet so that the space behind it could form a small vestry. The screen had been cut down to the level of the tops of the pews and the Commandments, etc., in three compartments, had been fixed to the north nave wall, opposite the pulpit. The hexagonal pulpit, of carved oak, was a fine Jacobean one, dated 1623. It was crowned by a sounding-board, upon which was painted "Holiness to the Lord" and a sentence in Hebrew. The nave was furnished with some box-pews on the south side and several open benches. The mediaeval font had long disappeared and the church was equipped with an interesting 18th century Classical font of oak, described as "light and elegant", consisting of a slender pedestal, upon which were placed six fluted wooden pillars with Ionic gilt capitals. The font was crowned with a wooden ogee-shaped cover. When Davy returned in 1846, this font had just been replaced by a new stone one, erected by Mr. Borrett and Mrs. Alston in memory of their children.

In 1848, the Incorporated Church Building Society made a grant towards restoration work being done to the church. The architect for this work was William Pattison of Woodbridge, who also designed the new Rectory at about the same time. The work probably included the erection of the vestry, the restoration of the east wall of the chancel, the roofs and the benches.

A visitor to a service in 1869 (where the congregation numbered 130, plus several children from the schools who occupied the singing gallery beneath the tower) commented that the seats were "placed so far into the church as to leave just room enough for the Communion Table, an organ and a neatly-carved pulpit". He described the Rector as "not the ordinary easy-going country parson" - a man whose preaching was "a discourse spoken from the heart". The priest described was the Rev'd George Frederick Pooley, L.L.B., who was Rector of Cransford and Bruisyard from 1846-1884. He came here having served curacies at

Langham Episcopi, Norfolk and St. Margaret's Ipswich and, as a J.P., was regarded as one of the best magistrates in the country. It was largely through his enthusiasm that the church was restored in 1848, the Rectory built and the interior further restored in the 1870s, when it largely assumed its present appearance.

The exterior was beautified in 1864 by the rebuilding in flint of the north porch, through the generosity of Thomas Borrett of Cransford Hall. Ten years later, the Harvest Festival Service (at which the preacher was the Rev'd R.H. King of Little Glamham) also celebrated the installation of a new organ, pulpit, prayer-desk, Communion Table and brass altar rails. The east window also received its stained glass, the walls were re-decorated, the benches and woodwork were varnished and the chancel was given a new floor of encaustic tiles. Again, the generosity of Thomas Borrett footed the bill for most of this work.

An article in the Ipswich Journal in January 1876 also praises the liberality of the Rev'd G.F. Pooley in the renovation and beautifying of the interior and mentions that a reredos was about to be presented as a memorial to Thomas Borrett, who had died in 1875.

It must have been sometime during the second decade of the 20th century that the tower received its embattled parapet. Its tiled pyramid cap went during the 19th century and a photograph published c.1908 shows the tower, looking slightly truncated, terminating just above the belfry windows.

In 1938, electric lighting was installed and the interior was redecorated. At this time the gallery, which filled the base of the tower, was removed.

St. Peter's has seen over 700 years of prayer and care - and this continues today. No visitor could fail to see the love and devotion which its present-day custodians lavish upon their ancient church, the features and treasures of which we now examine in detail.

WHAT TO SEE OUTSIDE THE CHURCH.

St. Peter's has an attractive rural SETTING, beside a quiet by-road, overlooking open country to the north and with the picturesque Church Farm House (c.1620) to the south. It stands towards the west end of its small parish,

not far from the border with Framlingham parish. A simple lychgate gives access to the churchyard and an avenue of yew-trees lines the path to the porch.

Like the majority of Suffolk churches, the walls are constructed mostly of flint-rubble, the finest flintwork being visible in the western TOWER, where we see simple flushwork panelling in flint and stone around the base and in the lower panels of the trim western diagonal buttresses which support and enhance the tower. Near the bases of these buttresses are stone shields, displaying the crossed keys of St. Peter (north) and the crossed swords of St. Paul (south), showing that the church was almost certainly originally dedicated to SS. Peter and Paul. The west window and the belfry windows each have two lights and are in the 15th century Perpendicular Style of architecture. Smaller single windows light the ringing chamber and two tiny windows in the west wall give light to the spiral staircase by which the tower is ascended in the south-west corner. The embattled parapet is an early 20th century replacement of the original, which disappeared many years ago. The tower is crowned by a pretty vane of wrought iron and a weathercock. On its eastern wall may be seen the marks of an earlier nave roof-ridge, which was considerably higher than the present one.

18th century brick buttresses support the south side of the nave and chancel. In the NAVE on this side is a blocked (possibly 13th century) doorway and a restored two-light window. The pair of two-light windows on the north side appear to be the original 15th century ones.

The CHANCEL shows much 19th century restoration in red brick and the east wall appears to have been substantially rebuilt. On the north side however is a small original Early English lancet window, which dates from the mid 1200s and is the oldest window in the church. The 19th century work probably dates from William Pattisson's restoration of 1848, when the small VESTRY (with wooden "Y" tracery in its two-light window) was also added.

The north PORCH is almost entirely work of 1864, when Thomas Borrett rebuilt it. This is recorded in an inscription near the crossed keys of St. Peter above the restored 15th century outer entrance arch. The plain inner entrance to the church itself appears to have been entirely renewed.

WHAT TO SEE INSIDE THE CHURCH.

The interior is bright and cared-for, with whitened walls to its simple, single-celled nave and chancel, and no chancel arch. Most of the work that we see here dates from various parts of the 19th century and is set beneath a 19th century arch-braced ROOF, which has a pair of arch braces marking the division between the nave and chancel. The BENCHES, with their simple fleur-de-lys ends, date probably from 1848, except for the two front benches, which have handsome traceried poppyhead ends in true 15th which were the gift of the Rev'd W. Mumford (Rector 1943-7). The handsome birds carved upon their armrests are believed to be cranes standing in fords - a pun upon the derivation of the village's name, which is thought to mean "Cranes' Ford".

The plain mediaeval TOWER ARCH is blocked, but note the tiny and well-preserved mediaeval faces at its base each side. The southern one is bearded and his northern counterpart shows a fine array of teeth! In the tower hang three BELLS. The treble was cast by William Brend of Norwich in 1594, the second dates probably from the 15th century and the tenor, originally a pre Reformation bell, was recast in 1878 by John Warner of London.

The octagonal FONT was made in 1846 by Clutton of Framlingham. It has a traceried stem and bowl and is a memorial to two infants - Charles Borrett, who died in 1832 aged 3 weeks and Louisa Alston, who lived for 18 weeks and died in 1845. Their names appear with the arms of their families on the north and south panels of the bowl. The eastern panel has the crossed keys of St. Peter and its western counterpart has the Lamb of God emblem, with the words of St. John the Baptist, "Behold the Lamb of God". Around the eastern panels is the text "Suffer little children to come unto me" Presumably little Louisa was the daughter of the Rev'd E.C. Alston, who was resident curate here in the early 1840s and later became Rector of Dennington. In 1989, a simple oak FONT COVER was given in memory of Mr. D. Pate, who was a Churchwarden here for many years.

The handsome 18th century CHEST opposite the entrance was clearly made for domestic use in a large house and not as a parish chest. The name of its owner (Katrina Husmans) and its date (1739) are carved upon it. Who Katrina was and how it arrived here, we do not know.

The PULPIT, LECTERN AND READING DESK were constructed in the 1870s, the pulpit being an unusual traceried structure forming two sides of a triangle - a rather poor substitute for its magnificent predecessor of 1623.

The fascinating little ORGAN has been dated c.1825 and was designed for use in a house, with space-saving in mind. It was taken from a house at Hawstead (near Bury St. Edmunds) after a fire in 1928, to Hawstead Rectory and was installed here in 1953. It has a single manual and four speaking stops.

The stone REREDOS was erected in 1876 by Catherine Borrett in memory of her husband, Thomas, who was such a generous benefactor to the church. Above the altar we see two emblems of Our Lord - the Lamb of God and the Pelican in her Piety, feeding her young with blood from her own breast. Each side of these are the "IHC" monograms of Our Lord's name. On the side walls of the sanctuary are the COMMANDMENTS (north) and the CREED and LORD'S PRAYER (south), painted in traceried panels.

The east window is adorned with STAINED GLASS, showing Christ the King, made by Lavers in 1874. The northern lancet window has glass showing St. Peter, which is a memorial to the Rev'd Herbert Watson, a former Rector, who died in 1915.

MEMORIAL INSCRIPTIONS.

Several plaques on the walls and a few ledger-slabs in the floors commemorate people of the past who have been part of this church and community. The wall plaques are as follows:-

Chancel, north -

1. The Rev'd George Frederick Pooley (1884) and Mary his wife (1886). He was a magistrate, Rural Dean and a Governor of the Albert Memorial College, Framlingham.
2. The Rev'd Herbert Watson (1915) and his son, St. John (1890).

Chancel, east.

1. Four children of the Rev'd G.F. Pooley - Warner Frederick (1848), Maria Anne (1849), Francis Churchill (1854) and Arthur Cransford (1858). The first two were aged 14 and the others aged 9 years.
2. Dame Maria Tuthill of Cransford Hall (1845), the widow

of the eminent physician, Sir George Tuthill (1835). This memorial was erected by their daughter and heiress, Laura, who married Thomas Borrett. Davy saw it in Calver's Shop at Yoxford, just before its erection.

Chancel, south.

1. Laura Maria, wife of Thomas Borrett (1863).
2. Thomas Borrett of Cransford Hall (1875). He was a lawyer, and so must have shared many areas of common interest with his parish priest.
3. Henry Dammant (1713) and Etheldreda (1729). This fine wall plaque occupies a blocked window. It has an urn at the top and cherubs' faces at the bottom.

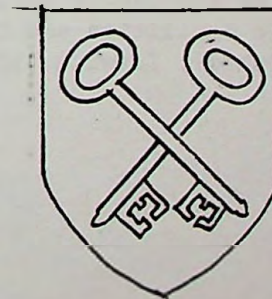
Nave, south.

1. Percy Rygate Borrett, M.A., J.P. (1963).
2. Thomas Percy Borrett (1913) and Jane Elizabeth (1961).
3. Major General Herbert Borrett (1919).
4. 1914-1918 War Memorial, commemorating three Cransford people who gave their lives.
5. Lieut Commander John Cyril Fitz Robert Borrett (1916). He was killed at the Battle of Jutland.

Nave, north.

1. George Tuthill Borrett (1892) and Ellen (1916).
2. A good memorial, with coat of arms, to George Clements Hamilton, J.P., of Cransford Hall and first Baronet of Ilford (1947) and Eleanor Christadora (1958).

A ledger slab to the east of the font commemorates George Warner Pooley, who died in 1885, and two small lozenge-shaped slabs in the sanctuary floor mark the burial places of the Rev'd G.F. Pooley and his children.



To our Visitors

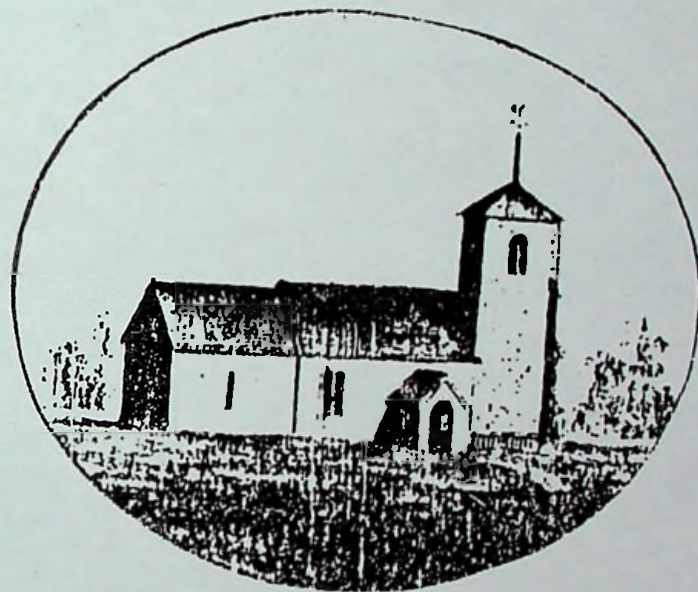
We hope that you have enjoyed exploring this ancient church and that you have felt thoroughly "at home" here in our Father's House, which is still in regular use for Christian worship - the purpose for which it was built.

If you have time, please pause and say a prayer for the priest and people whose Spiritual Home it is, and who would welcome any contributions that their visitors can spare to help them keep St. Peter's intact and beautiful for future generations to use and to enjoy.

May God bless and
keep you.

This Guide was compiled by Roy Tricker, a visitor to the church, who is grateful to Cynthia Brown and to several Cransford church-folk for their help, to the Staff of the County Record Office for the use of their facilities and to the Pupils of Copleston High School, Ipswich, for assembling the booklets.

1989.



Cransford Church.

C. 1800

Drawn by
Isaac Johnson

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