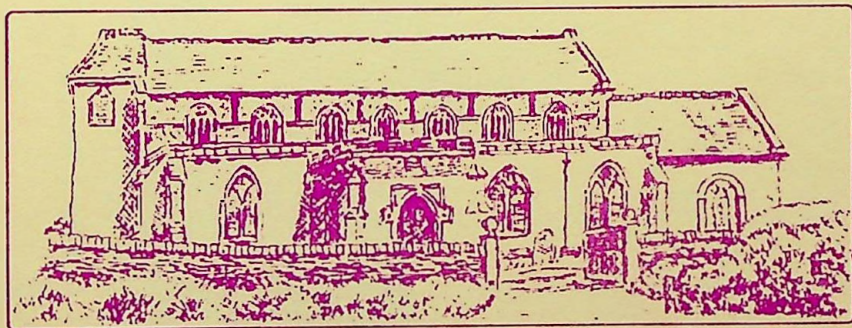
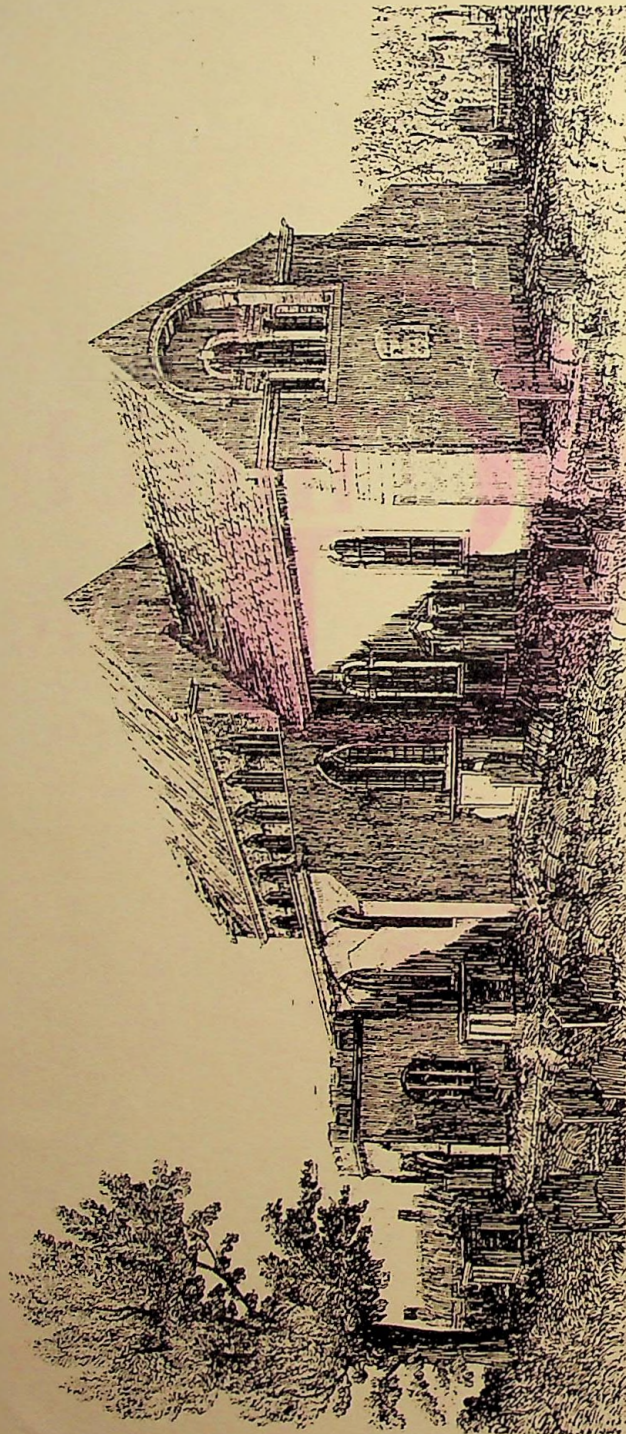


St Mary's Church Shotley

# G Church Guide



SUGGESTED PRICE 20 PENCE



The Church in 1840 - by Henry Davy

## Welcome to St Mary's Church,

where (as in most medieval churches) we can see craftsmanship of several different periods and religious traditions, as people at different times have altered it and moulded its unique character.

### Some landmarks in its long history:

- 1086 The Domesday Survey records the existence of a Church building here, although no evidence survives in the present structure.
- 1300 - The present Nave and Aisles were built. The aisle windows have "Y" tracery of c1300 and more ornate tracery of 1320-30. The arcades are of this period, maybe the Tower and former Chancel were as well.
- 1330
- late 1400's The Nave was heightened, its clerestory windows inserted and its sumptuous roof constructed. The South Porch was also added at this time.
- c.1638 Shotley's Tower collapsed! It was made of Septaria, the brown building stone dredged up from the local estuaries, which does not weather well and has caused the downfall of about a dozen East Suffolk towers. A report of the Norwich Consistory Court in 1678 states that it had been down "over forty years" and added "three bells are split, which lye in the church, and the 4th is hung up conveniently to call the p'ishioners together." It was not until later in the 1600s that the ruins were given their present covering and a tiled roof, possibly in 1686 when a new bell was cast.
- 1745 The medieval Chancel was replaced with a new one by the Rector, the Rev'd Henry Hervey Aston (the maintenance of the chancel was in those days the rector's responsibility, whilst the parishioners looked after the rest of the church). The Chancel is a classical period-piece, both in architecture and furnishings. At this time the tower arch was given a new door, the present vestry was built and the stonework of some of the aisle windows was (not very accurately) replaced. D. E. Davy noted that Shotley folk maintained, in the early 1800s, that the good Rector "forgot nothing to make the church very neat and handsome, but he forgot to pay for making it so"!
- 1867 The Barrel Organ, given in 1857, was converted into a "finger organ" by Messrs Godball of Ipswich.
- 1874 The church was closed for some weeks whilst the box-pews were replaced by the present benches, made by Robert Hawkins of Monks Eleigh, who also produced the pulpit and reading desk shortly afterwards. Dr Wooley, rector of East Bergholt, preached at the re-opening service on September 27th.
- 1980-1990 Much has been done to maintain and beautify the Church, including re-roofing the north and south aisles, re-flooring the south aisle, repairing the clerestory, the nave and tower roofs, and limewashing the interior.

## What to see outside the Church

Many visitors deserve to be congratulated for finding the Church in the first place! It is placed in a tiny hamlet not far from Shotley Hall Farm, quite remote from the main road, almost a mile from Shotley Street and nearly two from the busy and much-visited Shotley Gate.

1. Stand back and enjoy its magnificent Setting and its commanding position in this tranquil and picturesque corner of Suffolk. Enjoy the view over the fields which slope down to a glorious stretch of the Orwell Estuary; across to the Trimley Churches and Water Tower; and down to Felixstowe Docks.
2. The sloping Churchyard is atmospheric, and in its eastern section are many naval graves, including those of submariners (who have a fine memorial) perished in the Great War. HMS Ganges at Shotley Gate was until recently a Naval Shore Training Establishment.
3. The rubble walls of the Aisles have been rendered with pebbledash, and much of the stonework is worn by 600 years of British weather. The south aisle has a stone parapet and we can see where its gargoyles once were. The windows have "Y" tracery of c1300 and curved "ogee" tracery of c1320-30. The south east and east windows of the south aisle were renewed with portland stone in the 1700s, but most of the north aisle windows are original.
4. The squat stump of the Tower was patched up in the late 1600s. Although far from beautiful, it does lend a quaint and rustic character to this exterior. One wonders what the tower looked like before its fall.
5. The noble Clerestory which, like the porch, is faced with knapped flints (ie split to reveal their shiny cores) is 15th century and has sets of seven elegant three-light perpendicular-style windows each side to give light to the fine roof inside.
6. The Chancel is entirely work of 1745 (note the date and crest over its south doorway). It is a rare example in Suffolk of classical architecture. The windows have semi-circular arches with key-stones and wooden divisions. The east window, set beneath a deep arch, is in three sections and is known as a "Venetian" window.
7. By contrast the brick Vestry is very domestic-looking, with windows (recently replaced) similar to those to be seen in any 18th century house.
8. The 15th century Porch is but a shadow of its former glory but retains its elegant three-light windows, slender buttresses and dignified entrance arch, set beneath a square hood mould studded with tiny flowers and resting upon (very decayed) crowned lions. The upper part is entirely renewed with later brick and has recently been re-roofed. Note the holy water stoup that has just been revealed to the right of the inner doorway.



## What to see inside the Church

The interior is bright and spacious. The broad Nave and Aisles took shape during the 14th and 15th centuries. Note:-



1. The Arcades of five bays, dividing the aisles from the nave. These are 14th century and their octagonal piers have moulded capitals and bases. A keen eye will see that the arcades lean slightly outwards, and will also notice slight differences between the north and south arcades (probably the south was built first). The 14th century Tower Arch, which is slender and graceful, now has a classical-style door of 1745 beneath a wooden pediment. Above the tower arch are the Royal Arms of King George II.
2. The ruined interior walls of the tower show much Septaria. The Bell above was made by John Derby of Ipswich in 1686.
3. Crowning the nave is a magnificent Hammerbeam Roof which it is well worth your lying down on a bench to examine properly. The angels once on the ends of the hammer-beams have long gone (probably at the same time as lead shot became deeply embedded in the woodwork at the east end of the roof!), but note the delicate woodcarving in the cornices at the tops of the walls and in the traceried spandrels near the summit and at the sides. The aisle roofs have just been renewed but some 15th century woodwork has been replaced in situ in the north aisle roof which also has carved bosses.
4. The Benches, Choir-Stalls and Pulpit were made by Robert Hawkins of Monks Eleigh in 1874. The benches have straight ends with quatrefoils in circles and all this woodwork has a very "Victorian" flavour. The Font dates from c1906.
5. The table in the south aisle may have been the 17th century Communion Table in use before the chancel was rebuilt.
6. There is a framed list of rectors from 1290 onwards.
7. In one of the south arcade piers is a tiny 15th century Niche, maybe for a stone statue or possibly for a light.
8. The trefoil-headed Piscina in the south aisle wall shows that there has been an altar nearby historically (into its drain was poured the water from washing the priest's hands and the communion vessels at the Eucharist).
9. The Organ, given by the Rector in 1858, started life as a barrel-organ operated by a handle, playing set tunes on pegged "barrels", but it was converted to a keyboard instrument by Godball of Ipswich in 1867.

In the Chancel we enter another world - we pass from a Gothic pre-Reformation building into an 18th century Classical building, designed for the ordered Prayer Book worship of the Established Church. Nearly everything we see here was what the Hon. Henry Hervey (who later adopted his wife's family name of Aston) installed in 1745, a rare and fascinating period-piece. Note:-

1. The Aston Arms carved in wood over the chancel arch. The arch itself is lined with panelling and is not central to the nave. Presumably the medieval arch remains in situ beneath the present plaster of the nave east wall, for there is a distinctly hollow sound to the surround of the present structure.
2. The wooden Wainscoting lining the lower parts of the chancel walls; the two chancel doorways; also the wooden frames and divisions to the windows.
3. The three-sided Communion Rails showing fine 18th century woodcarving. Rails like this were first ordered for churches in the 1630s by Archbishop Laud, so that "dogges should not defile ye sanctuary."
4. The Altar Table with its richly carved cherubs.
5. The Altar Piece, or Reredos, is a splendid survival, with the Lord's Prayer, Commandments and Creed as well as paintings of Moses and aaron. The "IHS" monogram of our Lord's name appears at the top and the altar piece is crowned by urns.
6. The Plaster Ceiling, which has angels peering down from clouds and beautifully decorated cornices at the sides.
7. The Memorials to two former rectors, Dr Samuel Forster (died 1843) and the Rev'd J. F. A. Hervey (son of Lord Arthur Hervey, Bishop of Bath & Wells) who was rector here for 57 years and died in 1926. Until recently the Hervey family, Marquises of Bristol, were the patrons of St Mary's Church, which is today under the patronage of the Bishop of St Edmundsbury & Ipswich.

*Roy Tricker, 1989.*

