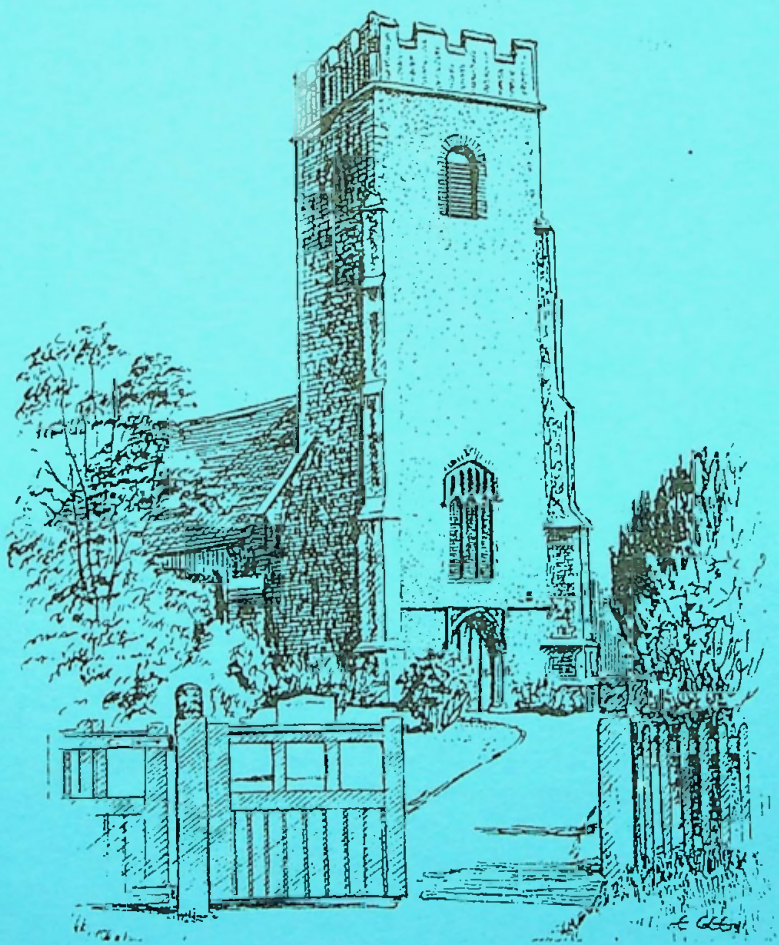


# A Guide to the Church of



St. Mary Magdalene  
Westerfield  
Suffolk

## WELCOME TO SAINT MARY'S

Westerfield's Church of St. Mary Magdalene has been a place of Christian worship, prayer and care for over 900 years. In 1086 the village was called "WESTREFELDA", meaning a clearing or open space to the west. There were people in the area as far back as the Stone Age and a flint mace and axe-head have been unearthed here. These are now on view at the Ipswich Museum, as are Roman remains discovered here, including cinerary urns and Roman coins.

Although thousands of English churches are dedicated to Mary, the Mother of Our Lord, churches dedicated to Mary Magdalene are comparatively rare and Westerfield shares this dedication with Debenham, Little Wheltenham, Sternfield and Withersdale in Suffolk and with only 156 other mediaeval churches in the whole of England.

We hope that you will enjoy exploring this ancient and beautiful church and that this little Guide will point you to some of its features. Above all, we hope that you will feel thoroughly at home here in our Father's House, which has been made sacred by centuries of prayer and use. Our old churches are places where people of all faiths or of none may find peace, beauty and inspiration and where Christians - whoever or whatever they are - may look upon as "Home".

MAY GOD BLESS AND PROTECT YOU.

## HOW OLD IS THE CHURCH?

The answer to this simple and sensible question often asked by visitors is rather complicated because, like the majority of our old churches, St. Mary's has gradually evolved over the years, as people of different periods and Christian traditions have altered and beautified it and have left their mark upon it. From what we can deduce in the building itself and from what scanty documentary evidence is available, the major landmarks in its long history are as follows:-

c.1086. The Domesday Survey states that Aluric the priest owned 12 acres and 2 acres of meadow here. The stonework from the original Norman doorway (removed in 1867) dates from about this time and we may assume that the core of the present nave survives from this Norman church.

c.1250-1300. Most of the windows in the nave and chancel date from this period, indicating a major re-ordering of the Norman church. A little later in the 1300s the western tower was added (or, at least, begun).

The 1400s. The tower received its west doorway, west window and flushwork parapet and a major refurbishing took place inside the church, which received its font and its splendid roof. The interior must have been a blaze of colour and carving, where a host of pictures and symbols in wood, stone and glass, provided a manual of religious education for mediaeval folk who could not read, nor understand the Latin of the services and the Scriptures.

c.1550-1867. During the mid 1500s the interior was altered to cater for the liturgical needs of the Reformed Church, with its Bible and services in English, so much of the colour and carving was removed. Further alterations were made in the 1640s by order of the Puritans in their zeal to rid our churches of "superstitious images and inscriptions". Although their Inspector, William Dowsing, does not record a personal visit to Westerfield, it is likely that the mediaeval glass, the carved and painted screen, and other beautiful things were destroyed, although the angels and figures on the roof have miraculously survived.

An idea of what the interior looked like during the 1700s and early 1800s is given in a painting made by Mrs. Elizabeth Drage before the 1867 restoration. The roof was

partially hidden by a plaster ceiling and the nave was filled with tall box-pews. A couple of mediaeval benches with poppyhead ends remained towards the west end. On the north side stood a fine three-decker pulpit, with a sounding-board. The Communion Table stood behind baluster rails and was flanked by wooden boards with the Lord's Prayer, Creed and Commandments. Above the east window was fixed the Royal Arms. There was a large pew (made in 1768) for the Edgar family in the chancel and a small gallery stood at the west end of the church. By contrast to the pre-Reformation interior, all was very plain. At this time the Holy Communion was celebrated three times per year and emphasis was placed upon the lengthy "preaching of the Word".

Henry Davy's etching of the exterior in 1842 shows the small embattled south porch which, together with the Norman doorway that it sheltered, was removed in 1867. This porch was noted by David Elisha Davy when he visited the church in 1829 as being "modern" and of red brick. A small vestry on the south side of the chancel was taken down in 1840 when a brick annexe was added to the north side of the nave. This served for about 40 years as the Village School, then as a Sunday School and later as a very spacious vestry.

1867. During this year the church underwent a thorough restoration. The porch was removed and the south doorway was replaced by a window, made to match the others, also the box-pews were taken out and were replaced by the present benches.

1938. The sanctuary was reordered and the present altar and reredos were installed, to the designs of H. Munro Cautley.

1986-7. To celebrate at least 900 years of this church and as this generation's thank-offering to past generations for handing down this lovely building, it was decided to enhance its beauty and usefulness for future generations by replacing the cheap-looking brick school-room with a new, tasteful and well-equipped Church Room, vestry, kitchen, etc. This building, designed by Jack Earwaker and built by Hoby of Ipswich, was dedicated by the Diocesan Bishop on March 8th 1987.

1993. This year saw the rebuilding of the organ, the restoration of the roof and the installation of floodlighting.

## EXPLORING THE EXTERIOR.

This small wayside church is prettily situated just to the east of the crossroads at the centre of the village. At one time it stood at the edge of a large green or common of some 47 acres which stretched westwards and where, during the Napoleonic War, a review of no less than ten thousand men took place.

The church stands in a trim and cared-for churchyard, part of which has been set aside as a conservation area. It is a simple and attractive building, which has no structural division between nave and chancel, the rendered walls of which form a contrast to the exposed flints of the tower. It is worth walking round the exterior, also standing back to view the building as a whole in its setting. It now also looks splendid at night, thanks to the floodlighting given by Dr. Joan Woodley in memory of her parents.

The NAVE AND CHANCEL were hardly touched in the 1400s when so much alteration took place in East Anglian churches. With only two exceptions, their windows all have the "Y" or intersecting tracery of c.1300. Some show signs of 19th century restoration and some have moulded arches (which may place them slightly later than the others), the south-west nave window being a very careful 1867 copy of the one beside it, replacing the former doorway and porch. Beside it in the wall is the niche for a Holy Water stoup.

The single lancet window on the north side of the chancel dates back to the 1200s, although the blocked single window on the south side is later (probably early 1300s); it has a traceried head to its arch and its sides have been restored with Tudor brick. More Tudor brick (late 1400s or early 1500s) may be seen in the priest's doorway nearby. The cross on the eastern gable was replaced in the 1930s, but the carved base upon which it stands is the original mediaeval one. It was again replaced in 1988, having been a casualty of the Great Storm of October 1987.

The CHURCH ROOM to the north of the nave is built with traditional flints and yet with its projecting windows is also unashamedly contemporary. Many visitors agree that it shows worthy and tasteful craftsmanship and design of our own times and that it blends well with the church itself.

The flint-rubble walls of the western TOWER grew during the 1300s and the tower was either finished off, or had a face-lift during the early 1400s. Look for the tiny piece of stone in the south-east corner, about 6 inches above the base-course, which has Norman carving and has clearly been re-used here. The fine west doorway shows lovely craftsmanship in stone, although nearly 600 years of British weather has worn away some of the carving. The moulding of the arch is studded with flowers, also the square hood-mould, which frames roses in the spandrels between it and the arch. The southern corbel has worn away, but we can see from its northern partner that these were fine pieces of stonecarving. The original door remains (as does also the mediaeval north door of the nave).

The west window, with its lion corbels, is an elegant example of Perpendicular architecture. The tiny opening to the south gives light to the spiral staircase which ascends this corner of the tower. The belfry windows are now sadly but a shadow of their former beauty, having lost their mullions and tracery. From the remains that are left we can see that they were two-light cinquefoil-headed windows, similar to those in several other local towers (like Great Bealings). The brick reframing of the western belfry window is, unfortunately, quite out of keeping with the original mediaeval work.

The embattled parapet is a worthy example of 15th century "flushwork" panelling in stone and knapped flint. Beneath it on the north and south sides, stone gargoyle faces peer out and throw the rainwater clear of the walls. On the east side is another carved head. At the four corners we can see the bases of former pinnacles, which once completed this tower, but which have long disappeared.

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#### WHAT TO SEE INSIDE THE CHURCH.

The west doorway admits us to a bright and colourful interior, where we may enjoy craftsmanship from different periods, including our own. The pride and care taken by its present-day custodians in their ancient church is also very much in evidence.

The earliest work can be seen in the masonry surrounding the south-west window of the nave. In the sill and around

the top of the inner arch have been set pieces of NORMAN STONWORK, decorated with zig-zag moulding, from the old south doorway. Nearby is the niche for the STOUP which stood beside the former entrance. External and Internal stoups at the same entrance are not common, although it was the custom to make the Sign of the Cross with Holy Water both on entering and leaving the church.

The octagonal FONT dates from the early years of the 15th century and has been very well-preserved. Its design is one which is common in East Anglia. Around the stem are four lions, above which is a band of flowers. On the underside of the bowl are angels with outstretched wings and the panels of the bowl are carved with the emblems of the Four Evangelists, alternating with angels, bearing shields upon which are carved other symbols. Working in a clockwise direction, these show:- St. Matthew (south), shield now plain (south-west), St. John (west), the cross of St. George (north-west), St. Mark (north), the Holy Trinity (north-east), St. Luke (east), three chalices (one missing) for the Blessed Sacrament (south-east).

The crowning glory of the church is its magnificent single-hammerbeam ROOF - considered to be one of the finest of its type in the county and a worthy tribute to the mediaeval woodcarvers' art. It is quite unusual to find a handsome 15th century roof such as this in a humble church which was not heightened or enlarged at the same time. Here we have a continuous roof of a high quality running unbroken along the entire length of the nave and chancel, also it is at a low enough level for us to see its construction and the beauty of its workmanship at quite close quarters. At the ends of the hammerbeams and wallposts are splendid figures, many of which are original. In the chancel are angels with outstretched wings and in the nave are Kings and Queens, carrying shields which display the Instruments of the Passion. A few of these figures were restored or renewed when the roof was repaired in 1901.

Stretching across the church at the division of nave and chancel is the original moulded ROOD BEAM, and in the wall to the south is the lower entrance to and the remains of the ROOD-LOFT STAIRCASE. Before the Reformation, a beautifully carved and painted rood-screen divided the chancel from the nave, at the top of which was the rood-loft (approached by the staircase) along which it was possible to

walk. Above this was the rood-beam, which supported the great Rood (a Crucifix, flanked by figures of Our Lady and St. John). Thus the congregation were constantly reminded of the central fact of the Faith - Christ Crucified. Roods and their lofts were destroyed in the mid 1500s and the screens were further mutilated by the Puritans, so it is not surprising that the screen here has entirely disappeared, although the beam remains.

The sanctuary area at the east end appears very small because since the Reformation it has been considerably shortened. The area of the original sanctuary extended further westwards, almost to the priest's door, giving much more space. In the south wall here is the original PISCINA drain, into which was poured the water from the washing of the priest's hands at the Mass. The niche containing it has been shortened and may once have terminated in a fine arch. The windowsill nearby has been lowered to form SEDILIA (seating for the clergy during certain parts of the Mass). The small PRIEST'S DOORWAY was restored and a new door fixed in memory of Annie Munro Cautley, wife of the Rev'd Richard Cautley (Rector 1890-1901).

Their son, Henry Munro Cautley, designed the present ALTAR and the sumptuous WOODWORK LINING THE EAST WALL, which was made in 1938 by Ernest Barnes of Ipswich, when the sanctuary also received a new floor. The woodwork was given in memory of Charles Aldrich, who lived at Westerfield Hall. The old oak altar was given to the new church of St. Andrew's Ipswich, which Munro Cautley had designed. The PRAYER DESK near the altar was presented in 1957 in memory of H.E. Singleton Cooper, who was Diocesan Secretary for 26 years. The beautifully carved LECTERN (also designed by Cautley) is a memorial to Raymond Bowman, who died in World War 2.

Set in the woodwork of the simple 19th century PULPIT is a CRUCIFIX, brought by the Rev'd Charles Swinnerton (who was Rector from 1949-51) from Oberammergau and placed here in his memory.

Above the tower arch hang the ROYAL ARMS of King George III. These were originally placed on the east wall, as were the LORD'S PRAYER, CREED AND COMMANDMENT BOARDS, now to be seen on the walls of the tower. These were probably painted in the late 1700s, as was also the CHARITY BOARD on the west wall of the nave, which records the Francis

Brook Charity (he is buried beneath a table-tomb outside the priest's door and he gave £300 to the poor of the parish). Beneath this hangs a LIST OF RECTORS of Westerfield, mentioning Aluric the Domesday priest and then giving a complete list from 1300. It was researched by Norman Perkins and was inscribed by Alan Forsdike in 1987.

The CURTAINS beneath the tower incorporate drapery used in Westminster Abbey at the Coronation in 1953. Notice the various Royal emblems in them.

The present nave BENCHES replaced the old box-pews in 1867. Notice the two new ones near the font, made in the same style by Martin Boon in memory of Lawrence Woodley. The array of KNEELERS, made by Westerfield people from the early 1960s onwards add colour and beauty to the interior. The chancel is equipped with 19th century STALLS, which have poppyhead ends.

The PICTORIAL MAP OF THE PARISH (1977) on the nave's south wall is the work of Peggy Stewart, with lettering and decorative cartouches by Brenda M. Eustace. It won First Prize (out of 94 entries) in the Suffolk Show Competition (the Felix Smith Trophy).

The ORGAN, by Bishop & Son, has two manuals, pedals and nine speaking stops. It was given by Mr and Mrs L. Turner in memory of their only son, who was wounded in 1915. This instrument was rebuilt with new action and two new 2' stops by Peter Bumstead in 1993.

The north door gives access to the CHURCH ROOM, which is bright, spacious and homely. Several interesting items have been placed here, including Claire Lunney's intricately worked sampler, commemorating 900 years of the church, which she created in 1984-5.

Details of the three BELLS in the tower may be seen on the wall. The treble and second bells are mediaeval, cast about 1400, probably at John Langhorne's London bellfoundry. The tenor, recast in 1852 by Mears of Whitechapel, was originally made about 1535 at the Bury bellfoundry. The bells weigh about 3½cwt, 4½cwt and 5½cwt respectively.

Amongst the church plate (in safe-keeping and not generally on display) is an Elizabethan CHALICE, made in Ipswich c.1560-70.

## MEMORIALS.

St. Mary's is not rich in magnificent monuments, but the memorials here are interesting because of the people they commemorate - people of the past who have been part of this church and village. Apart from the furnishings which were given as memorials and have already been mentioned, most of the memorials can be seen in the walls, floors and windows of the church.

The oldest memorial is the ancient BURIAL SLAB in the floor near the north door, which has the indent of its long-lost brass figure and inscription.

Many of the LEDGER SLABS in the floors are now hidden from view beneath carpets. Two under the tower commemorate Samuel Collett (1651), his son Samuel (1710) and Henry Collett (1802). The Colletts were Lords of the Manor from 1600 until the early 1800s and Elizabeth, widow of the former Samuel, rebuilt Westerfield Hall in 1683.

Two ledger slabs in the sanctuary floor commemorate former Rectors - Joseph Raymond (1741) and Peter Lathbury (1768); the latter is also commemorated by a tablet on the south chancel wall.

### WALL PLAQUES - Chancel, north:

1. Deborah Whitefoord (1829), who died at Brussels as a result of her clothes catching fire.
2. Major J.R. Whitefoord (1825), who was accidentally shot by a friend whilst out shooting. (The tributes to these people are worth pausing to read; the Major's brother, who was Rector here, may well have composed them).
3. Walter Makins (1914), of Red House Farm.
4. Bertram Coleby Ransome, a former Director of Ransome's, Sims & Jefferies' engineering firm.
5. Henry Munro Cautley, FSA, ARIBA. (1959) and his wife, Mabel (1958). This former Diocesan Surveyor, Architect and expert on mediaeval churches is known to church-crawlers throughout the country. His books on Suffolk and Norfolk churches, also on Royal Arms in churches, are standard works. His father was Rector here and he read the lessons in this church over a period of 65 years. Buildings designed by him include the church

of St. Augustine and the Northgate Street Library in Ipswich and the Bartlet Convalescent Home in Felixstowe. He also designed the reredos, lectern and War Memorial in this church.

### Chancel - south:

1. The Rev'd Pater Lathbury (1768) and family.
2. William Flindall Bird (1881) and family. He was Churchwarden here.

### Nave - north:

War Memorial, with Royal Arms, by H. Munro Cautley.

### Nave - south:

1. James Hitch (1824) and his wife. He was Rector here for 34 years.
2. Alfred Donald Gaul (1900). He died in the U.S.A.

## STAINED GLASS WINDOWS.

West window - showing St. Mary Magdalene, by William Morris. In memory of the Rev'd Charles Drage, Rector for 40 years (died 1875). He came from Buntingford, Herts. His wife, Elizabeth, painted a beautiful picture of the interior of the church and also produced a monthly handwritten journal which was circulated privately and was regarded by some as rather ribald! She produced no less than 13 children and died in 1897, aged 95 years.

Nave - north. St. Michael, from the William Morris Studios. In memory of William Drage (1921) and Gertrude, his wife. He was the fourth child of Charles Drage. A plaque to him may be seen in the window-splay and on the sill is a plaque to Frances Drage (1906), the seventh child.

Chancel - north lancet. The Banner of St. George, possibly also by William Morris. In memory of Mary Drage (the eleventh child), who died in 1850 aged nine years.

Chancel - east window. The Ascension, designed by J. Bouvier and made by J. Powell & Sons. In memory of the Rev'd Mileson Edgar (1853), Rector of St. Nicholas Ipswich and of Trimley St. Mary. He was Lord of the Manor here, his family having inherited it sometime just before 1819.

Chancel - south. The Raising of Jairus' Daughter - designed by H. Casolani and made by J. Powell & Sons. In memory of Mary Packard (1865) of Westerfield House.

The names of many other departed parishioners and friends of the church are recorded in the BOOK OF REMEMBRANCE which is placed on the sedilia. This was the gift of Michael and Anne Treasure; it has been inscribed by Ann Smith and its case was made by Martin Boon.

The PARISH REGISTERS are complete from 1538 (Baptisms and Burials) and 1539 (Marriages). It is interesting that 1538 was the year when the keeping of such registers was first ordered. They are now deposited at the County Record Office in Gatacre Road Ipswich, where microfiche copies are available for viewing.



*Westerfield Church c1818, by  
Isaac Johnson*

This Guide was compiled by Roy Ticker, who acknowledges the extensive research of the late Mr. S.F. Watson and the advice and encouragement of the Rector, the Rev'd Canon Henry Lunney. Westerfield is fortunate also in having a superb parish history, entitled "Westerfield Church and Village, 1087-1987", by Anthony Hyde and Norman Perkins, which is essential reading for anybody who wishes to learn more about the village.

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