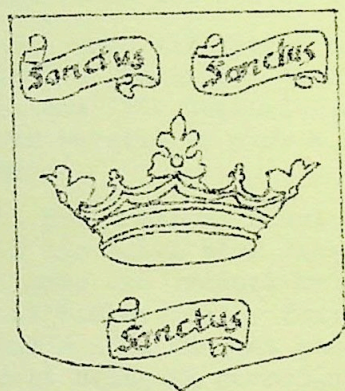


FORNHAM  
ALL SAINTS  
Parish Church



History  
and  
Guide

Welcome to this ancient and interesting church, which is attractively situated at the centre of the village, near the A1101 road, about two miles north-west of Bury St. Edmunds. Before the Reformation this church was in the possession of the monks of the great Benedictine Abbey at Bury St. Edmunds.

In the fabric of All Saints' can be seen examples of all styles of mediaeval architecture from the Norman period onwards and from this workmanship we can see how the building grew over the centuries. The south doorway is late Norman (12th century); the Early English style (13th century) is seen in the lower part of the tower, which received its belfry stage at the beginning of the Decorated period (c.1300), when a window was also placed in the south wall of the Norman nave. The chancel was refashioned about 1320-30 and shows the later development of the Decorated style. The aisles and porch were added during the Perpendicular period of the 15th century, thus completing the fabric of the church as we see it today.

Since the Reformation, much alteration has taken place in the church. A great deal of beautiful craftsmanship was destroyed during the 16th and 17th centuries, although niches, benches and other items survive to give a hint of the church's pre Reformation splendour.

The ecclesiologist, David Elisha Davy, visited Fornham All Saints in 1829 and his notes show what the interior looked like then. The nave and chancel had plaster ceilings which hid their ancient timber roofs. Texts of scripture were painted on the walls. The ancient benches provided some of the seating, the rest being in commodious box-pews. On the west wall hung the Royal Arms and flanking the east window, above the simple Communion Table, were the Apostles' Creed and Lord's Prayer on one side and the Ten Commandments on the other.

By the 1860s the building had become very dilapidated and a report was made on the fabric, resulting in a thorough restoration which cost £1,300. The church was closed in October 1863 and was reopened on June 6th 1864 by a service of rededication at which the Ven. Lord Arthur Hervey preached to a large congregation.

The contractor for the work was Thomas Farrow of Bury St. Edmunds and the architect was Sir Arthur Blomfield, one of the better-known architects of the Gothic Revival, who designed many 19th century churches, including the churches of St. John at Ipswich and Felixstowe.

The restoration work here included renewing the stonework of most of the windows, carefully copying their original design, totally reroofing the chancel, south aisle and the transept and restoring the mediaeval roofs of the nave and north aisle, refacing the porch with flint, installing a new chancel arch, incorporating some fragments of the mediaeval rood screen into a new parclose screen, replacing the box pews with open benches and replacing the brick floors with new floors of tiles. The main external alteration was the replacing of the cheap brick tower parapet with the present embattled parapet and corner pinnacles, which had long since disappeared.

The approximate internal dimensions of the church are:-

Nave	- Length -	$43\frac{1}{2}$ feet,	Breadth -	$19\frac{1}{4}$ feet.
Chancel	- Length -	$34\frac{1}{4}$ feet,	Breadth -	$19\frac{1}{4}$ feet.
North Aisle	- Length -	$29\frac{1}{2}$ feet,	Breadth -	$8\frac{1}{4}$ feet.
South Aisle	- Length -	$36\frac{1}{4}$ feet,	Breadth -	$10\frac{1}{4}$ feet.
Transept	- West/east -	$15\frac{1}{4}$ feet,	North/south -	20 feet.
Porch	- West/east -	$8\frac{1}{2}$ feet,	North/south -	$10\frac{3}{4}$ feet.
Tower	- External breadth across west face -	$13\frac{3}{4}$ feet.		

#### EXTERIOR.

When visiting any ancient church, it is always essential to examine the outside of the building, because much that is of beauty and interest is easily missed by not doing so. There is a considerable amount to be seen in the exterior here.

The tower is short, unbuttressed and has no west doorway. In its base, on the west side, is an early 13th century lancet window and there are traces of what must have been a similar window above it. On the north and south sides are similar lancets, that on the north side is now blocked. A careful look at the tower reveals that this lower stage leans slightly outwards towards the west. The belfry windows have simple 'Y' tracery of c.1300. The parapet and pinnacles were added in 1864, but the fine grotesque gargoyles at the four corners are mediaeval and are nicely restored.

On the ground, near the south side of the tower, is a stone coffin, probably of 13th century date, with a shaped head-piece. This was found beneath the porch when it was being re-floored in 1864.

The west end of the nave is unbuttressed on the south side. In its south wall is a double 'Y' traceried window of c. 1300.

The south aisle was added to the church in the late 15th century. This is a fine piece of Perpendicular architecture and has buttresses and a rich flushwork parapet, which is embattled and has a series of initials and shields in the flushwork (possibly relating to the benefactors of this aisle), then the inscription, "IHS (Jesus) HAVE MERCY". There are good mediaeval gargoyles to throw the rainwater clear of the wall and on some of the battlements can be seen the bases on which pinnacles once stood. The aisle windows are all Perpendicular; there are three double windows on the south side (the tracery of the centre window being different from that in the other two), and a three-light, renewed, east window.

The chancel is a good specimen of late Decorated architecture (c.1320-30). There is a double window on the south side, with pleasant ogee tracery, also a nicely moulded priest's doorway. On the north side are two double windows, with flowing tracery, the easternmost of which has been entirely renewed. The fine three-light east window has reticulated (net-like) tracery, beneath a hood-mould which rests upon male and female corbel heads.

Nearby, in the churchyard, is a good 18th century headstone, with skulls and a cherub carved upon it. Another similar headstone can be seen near the priest's doorway.

The north transept has a lead roof and the lower portions of its crocketed pinnacles. Its four-light Perpendicular window was entirely renewed in 1864.

The north aisle is also of the Perpendicular period, with slender buttresses, two-light windows and a nicely-restored north doorway. This must be roughly contemporary with the south aisle, although the two aisles are not identical.

The south porch, by which we enter the church, although much restored in 1864, is a worthy example of mediaeval craftsmanship. It is buttressed and is faced with knapped flints. There are crocketed pinnacles at the corners and over the entrance is a parapet of stone quatrefoils with a niche at the centre. The large outer arch is Perpendicular, but is unusual because it rests upon semi-circular responds. This porch is also 15th century, but appears to have been erected before the south aisle because it has double lateral windows on both sides. The roof of the porch has some original mediaeval timbers, including a splendid boss in the centre, of a human face.

The inner doorway is a simple, but worthy example of the late Norman period and probably dates from the second half of the 12th century. This is the oldest feature of the church and has been carefully restored. The arch has a semi-circular head, with a simple roll-moulding around it, also large impostes and a western floriated capital.

#### INTERIOR.

The south doorway gives access to an interior which is clean, colourful and cared-for.

The nave roof, which dates largely from the 15th century, is of the single-framed, collar-brace type. The north aisle, which also has a fine mediaeval roof, is divided from the nave by an arcade of three bays. The south aisle arcade has two bays opening into the nave and a further bay opening into the chancel. Both arcades date from the late Perpendicular period, maybe even as late as the early 16th century, but the south arcade has richer moulding than the north.

A simple doorway gives access from the nave to the tower and near it, on the west wall, are the framed Lord's Prayer, Creed and Ten Commandments, dating probably from the 18th century. These were moved here from the east wall, above the altar. Also on the west wall is a table of Parochial Charities and their benefactors.

The octagonal font has a plain unsculpted bowl on an equally plain pedestal. It probably dates from the 15th century, but the stonework may have been re-cut.

In the nave are twelve fine mediaeval benches, with poppy-head ends. Some also have carved animal heads. Three more mediaeval benches can be seen in the north aisle.

Both aisles are extremely narrow. In a respond of the eastern arch of the north aisle is a mediaeval wall-bracket, with small fleurons in its moulding. It now supports a modern statue of the Suffolk Saint, Edmund, King and Martyr. Nearby, in the nave wall (near the War Memorial), is another smaller wall-bracket.

On the wall of the north aisle hangs a list of Rectors of this church from the year 1308, and of institutions since 1086.

The north aisle is divided from the north transept by a fine four-square early Tudor arch, which has small spandrels

containing quatrefoils. In the jambs of this very noteworthy arch are trefoil-headed traceried panels.

In the north transept can be seen the church's seven brasses, also other wall monuments and a hatchment. Notice also in the south-east corner, the squint, which enabled people standing here to see what was taking place at the High Altar. The arch which divides this transept from the nave is a good one, with embattled capitals.

At the east end of the south aisle, on the north side, is a pedestal with a moulded capital. In the southern angle opposite is a magnificent vaulted niche, with an elaborate canopy which is embattled and has quatrefoil tracery and pinnacles. Modern statues can be seen, of Our Lady and the Infant Jesus and of the Sacred Heart. Nearby is a late Perpendicular piscina. Further west, in the south wall of this aisle, is another mediaeval wall-bracket, with a modern statue of St. Antony.

The chancel arch (rebuilt in 1864) gives access to a very impressive and colourful chancel, which is rightly dominated by the beautiful High Altar, furnished in the pre Reformation 'Sarum' tradition.

The chancel roof was reconstructed in 1864, although the wall-plates are mediaeval. It is made of deal, with oak bosses and is beautifully painted to resemble what such a roof would have looked like before the Reformation.

Beneath the arch to the south aisle is a modern parclose screen in which fragments of the mediaeval Rood Screen have been incorporated, although the ancient woodwork is difficult to identify.

In the east wall, to the north of the beautiful east window, is a small niche, which is put to its correct use and contains a statue. The windowsill in the south wall of the sanctuary has been lowered to form a three-height sedilia. These provided seats for the Celebrant, Deacon and Subdeacon during certain parts of the mediaeval High Mass.

To the west of the sedilia (a most unusual position) is the cinquefoil-headed piscina, which has crocketed pinnacles and a finial. The piscina, which is normally east of the sedilia in mediaeval churches, was the drain down which the water was poured from the washing of the Sacred Vessels and the priest's hands at the Eucharist.

The glass in the east window is by Hardman of Birmingham. This firm made some of the finest stained glass of the Gothic Revival. Hardman originally manufactured church metalwork, until A.W.N. Pugin persuaded him to expand into stained glass. He designed and made windows for most of Pugin's churches (including several Roman Catholic cathedrals) and also worked for some of the great Anglican architects, like Butterfield. The west window of the Cathedral at Bury St. Edmunds is by him. The east window here shows Our Lord, reigning, and the people represent 'All Saints'.

#### MONUMENTS.

Most of the noteworthy monuments in the church can be seen in the north transept. Here, on the west wall, are preserved seven brasses. They commemorate (from south to north):-

1. Thomas Barwick, (died 1599). He was Professor of Medicine at Bury St. Edmunds, and is commemorated by a head and shoulders figure, a shield and a Latin inscription.
2. Ann, wife of William Adams, (died 1607). An inscription.
3. Thomas Mannock, (died 1608). A Latin inscription.
4. John Mannock, (died 1611). An inscription.
5. Mary Mannock, (died 1615). An inscription.
6. Thomas Mannock, (died 1656). A longer and very flattering inscription, which is worth pausing to read.
7. A shield.

Also in this transept, on the east wall, are several wall monuments. Commemorated on these are three priests, two of whom were Rectors of this parish, also the wife of one of them. On the west wall, over the entrance to the north aisle, is an interesting monument to Lieut. John Cowsell, who died in 1811, leading his company "to charge the enemy" through a Portuguese village.

There are also some ledger slabs in the floors of the aisles and transept.

The organ, on the north side of the chancel, is a two manual and pedal instrument, by Bishop and Son, of London and Ipswich. It has seven speaking stops and three couplers.

There are five bells in the tower. One of these is a mediaeval bell and is the sole survivor of three which were here in 1553. It was made by Brazier, the Norwich bellfounder, about 1450 and has a Latin inscription which is translated, "In this chamber Gabriel now sound sweetly". Three bells

were added in 1623-4 and the remaining bell arrived in 1903.

More details about these bells, together with other points about the church, can be seen in the excellent set of notes which were compiled by a former Rector and which can be seen near the main door.

The registers of this church date back to the year 1559.

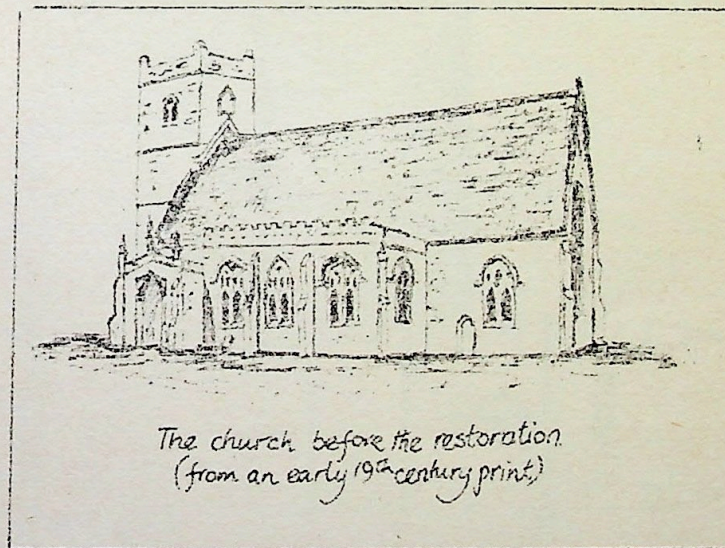
The church possesses some interesting silver Communion plate but, owing to security risk and high cost of insurance, this is now kept in a Bank. The items are:-

Chalice: Height 7", diameter at top  $3\frac{3}{8}$ ", depth of bowl 4".  
Made in 1566.

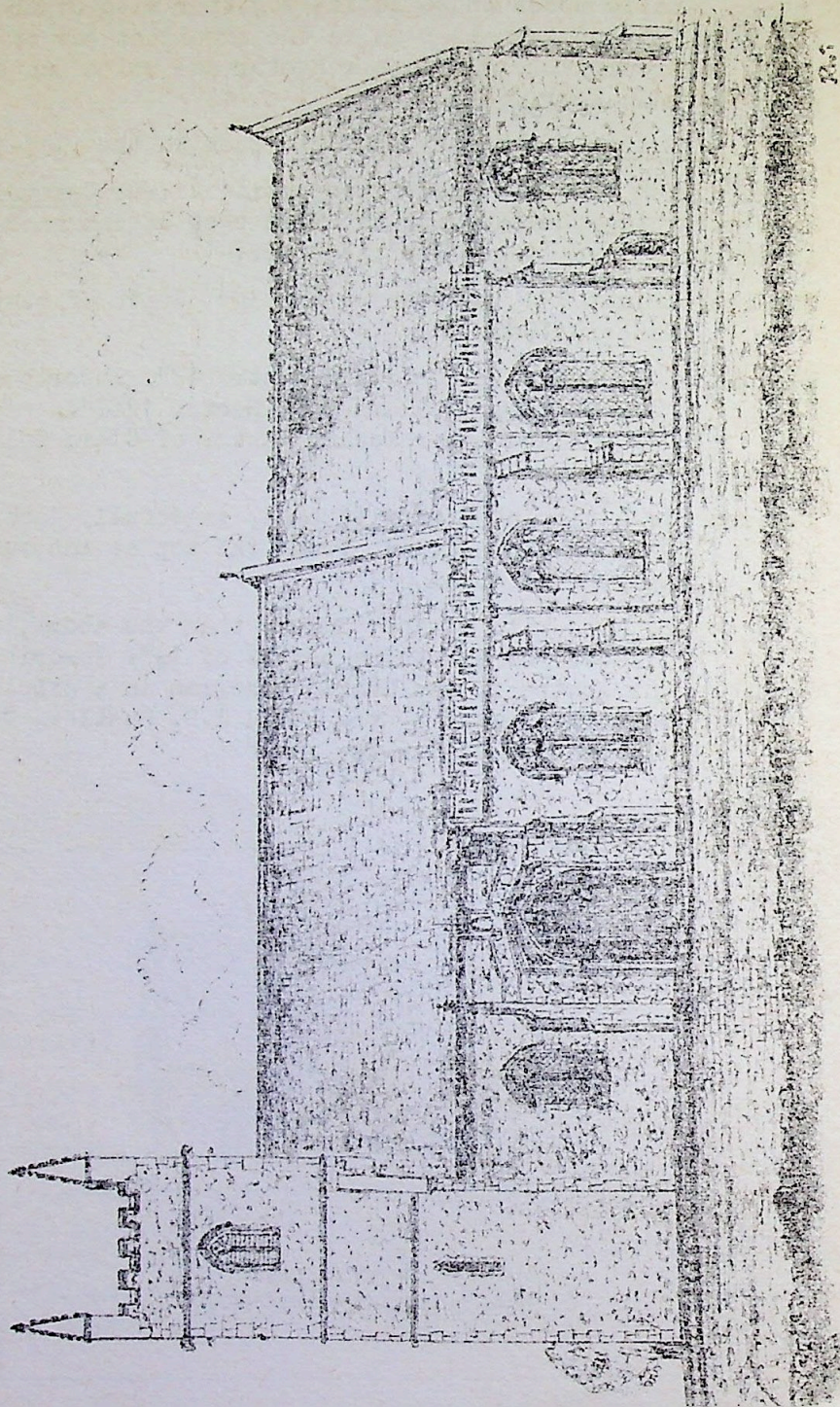
Flagon: Height 10", girth round centre 12". Inscribed "The gift of Peter Goldard D.D. Rector 1762".  
Dr. Goldard later became Master of Clare College, Cambridge.

Patens: 1. A simple paten with base, tastefully decorated with an incised line round the top of the outer rim. Dated 1660.

2. Also with a base, larger than the above, with a diameter of  $7\frac{3}{4}$ " and a height of  $1\frac{1}{2}$ ". Inscribed in the centre is the Sacred Monogram in a circle of rays. Presented by the Rev'd J.D. Hustler, Curate of Fornham All Saints, in 1826.



The church before the restoration  
(from an early 19<sup>th</sup> century print)



This ancient House of God has stood upon this spot since the time of the Normans. Its walls breathe the atmosphere of the prayer and devotion of eight hundred years. To countless generations of Fornham people it has been "The Father's House" and, as such, its custodians over the centuries have spared no amount of time, money, love or hard work to preserve it, beautify it and hand it down, intact, to us, for our use and enjoyment.

Today the Church in Fornham All Saints is still very much alive and nobody can fail to see the pride and care taken in this church by its present day custodians. In 1970, it was re-roofed with hand-made tiles. Again, in 1974, extensive repairs were carried out, particularly to the top parts of the tower.

An ancient and beautiful building such as this is very expensive to maintain and it is kept in repair entirely by what people are prepared to give to it, by voluntary contributions. Those who tend and care for this church would therefore appreciate any contribution, however small, that the visitor can spare, also your prayers for them and for the work of the Church in this place.

This guide has been written and produced by Roy Tricker, who is grateful to the Rector, the Rev'd Bill Peck, for advice and encouragement. The booklets have been assembled and stapled by pupils of Copleston High School, Ipswich.

March 1981.