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St Peter's Church Stutton



Church Guide and History

WELCOME!

There has been a church on this site for about 1000 years. It is mentioned in the Domesday Book (called Scottuna) and the discovery of an early consecration cross, slit window and runic stone during extensive alterations in the 19th century would seem to confirm this. However, the present nave dates from the middle of the 14th century.

You enter the church through the massive early 15th century **TOWER** on the south side, built with flints and Bath stone dressings. It stands 60 feet high and offers excellent views over the River Stour. In 1858 a gilt weathercock was placed on top, now unfortunately lost. The external oak doors were erected in 1850.

The **NAVE** is entered by the original south door with simple 14th century ironwork. Notice the scratch marks on the door jambs; some may be taken for masons' marks. The nave itself is 60 feet long and 19 feet wide. Memorials on the south side commemorate members of the Reade family of Crowe Hall. The entrance to the family vault is outside. The plain **WEST WINDOW** is the oldest in the church. Other windows are filled with Victorian stained glass, one in memory of George Baker, a former curate and the founder of the delightful almshouses on the Tattlingstone road. The stained glass in three of the windows (those placed in memory of the Mills and Barringtons) is from the factory of Charles Clutterbuck in Stratford, East London. The windows date back to 1847 and are rare survivors of glass from this source in Suffolk.

The other glass is from Ward and Hughes' workshop with the exception of that in memory of Hill Jones from Powell in Whitefriars.

The handsome brass **LECTERN** was presented by Susanna Boby of Alton Hall in 1875. Alton Hall is now under the Alton Water reservoir.

The **CHANCEL** was rebuilt in 1875 by the Revd Thomas Mills. It is now the site of the main altar, brought down from the sanctuary along with the pitchpine altar rails. The flooring has been extended and the choir stalls removed. It was thought that a brass half portrait of Nicholas Andrews (Rector, died 1413), was hidden under the choir stalls but no trace of this was seen during the re-ordering in 1988. On the floor is a black marble flag over the Mills' vault. Nearby on the wall are brass memorials to Thomas Mills and his second wife, the Hon Elizabeth. Mr Mills was rector here for 58 years, also a great benefactor and patron.

The **CHANCEL SCREEN** is a carved oak copy of the 15th century screen at Elmswell in West Suffolk. In 1847 it cost £60. It was later moved back to the west end to provide a division for the vestry but was replaced in its original position earlier this century. It has now been adapted to divide the chancel from the sanctuary.

The **SANCTUARY** has a shell-like piscina in the south wall, found hidden during the 1875 alterations. That year too, Minton tiles replaced the white Woolpit brick flooring. The Bath stone **REREDOS** was erected in 1879; it has nine panels with moulded mullions and cusped heads, as around the piscina. Roundels symbolising St Peter and St Edmund are new. The **EAST WINDOW**, (Ward & Hughes), shows the Good Shepherd and was inserted in 1875 by the Hon Mrs Mills. The mullions and tracery are exact copies of the original. The two side windows were destroyed by enemy action during the last war. They depicted the aged Simeon taking the infant Jesus into his arms and the raising from the dead of Jairus' daughter. The brass crucifix was given in 1898 replacing another given in 1867. Until the Victorian alterations, the Ten Commandments on zinc were fixed to the east wall. They were repainted in 1778 for £8 10s 9d. The triptych is an 1875 copy of an original in Cologne cathedral showing (a) Adoration of the Magi (b) St Ursula and Virgins and (c) St Gregory and his warriors.

The **ORGAN CHAMBER** was built in 1879 as a vestry and enlarged in 1902 when the present two-manual organ by Bishop was installed.

This was extensively overhauled in 1977. From 1832 there was a barrel organ in the gallery. It cost £70 and played 12 tunes. When these had been well learned, in 1840 another barrel of 12 tunes was added, followed by a more versatile harmonium in 1860. Originally, the singing was led by a small orchestra. In 1823 the violoncello needed 12s repair. The organ chamber has now been skillfully adapted to provide kitchen and toilet facilities.

1875 was a year of great change for the **LADY CHAPEL** was also added then. It bears the funeral hatchment of the first wife of Thomas Mills, and a memorial to Tobias Rustat, rector for 45 years who laid out the old rectory gardens (now Stutton House) with many fine specimens of trees. A recently discovered portrait of him by Thomas Gainsborough is now in Gainsborough House Museum, Sudbury. The east window depicting the Crucifixion was given in 1847 and was originally the main east window. Most of the glass was renewed following bomb damage but the brilliance of the original can be seen in the top lights. The Lady Chapel was refurbished in 1975 and divided from the main church, along with the transept, by the windowed panelling in 1988. This was the work of a local man, Fred Nickson.

The **TRANSEPT** was built in 1862 in the Early English style. Two lancet windows bear the arms of Tollemache and Western. The children of the church school sat here in Victorian times.

The stone **FONT** stands at the west end. It is 13th century and a deeper straight-sided version of that seen at neighbouring Tattlingstone. It was restored in 1850 and raised on to a platform with a brass and enamel inscription. The cover was given in memory of a former rector's wife in 1933. A **GALLERY** was erected at the west end in 1749 at the instigation of Tobias Rustat "for the sole use of the singers". Accommodation was short however before the opening of the transept and two wings were added in 1828. Riotous behaviour in it demanded a beadle as late as 1870: "for attending the boys and doors of the church £2 12s per annum".

On the walls of the west end are two large alabaster **MONUMENTS**. On the south side, a man in armour and a woman kneeling opposite each other depict Sir Isaac Jermy and Lady Jermy who died in 1623. On the north wall is the eldest son of the previous couple, John Jermy and his wife Martha, to whom he dedicated the doggerel verse beneath her figure. John Jermy died in 1662. The Jermys were patrons of the living and lords of the manor of Stutton Hall. They also had connections with Metfield in Suffolk. These two memorials were originally on either side of the sanctuary and were placed here in 1875. The heraldic devices were brightly coloured; now only traces of colour remain and Sir Isaac and his wife have lost their hands. This, and the mutilation of a brass inscription to John Smythe (1534) on the floor of the east end of the nave requesting prayers for his soul, were probably done in Cromwellian times. The famous Suffolk iconoclast William Dowsing does not mention Stutton himself but his reforming ardour was shared by several others. Certainly all was not well in Stutton then, for in 1645 John Wilby was removed from office for refusing to sign the covenant and use the new liturgy, and Thomas Warren, and later John Gouldstone replaced him as rectors.

There are 6 **BELLS** originally rung from the base of the tower, but now from a ringing chamber, constructed last century. The tenor bell weighs 12 cwt. Three were made by the famous Miles Graye in 1684, one by Charles Newman in 1692 and another by Harry Pleasant in 1706. The treble bell was made in 1913 when the older bells were recast. They have needed a lot of money over the years and constantly appear in the churchwardens' accounts. The ringers were paid for extra duties: 5s 0d at the coronation in 1728 (George III), in 1757 "for wringing (sic) at Gunpowder Treason 5s 6d" and "for 3 hours tolling at the queen's funeral 3s 0d" in 1819 (Caroline, William IV's consort). In 1553 only three bells were recorded. The bells are in good condition and rung regularly.

The **CHURCH PLATE** includes a small silver chalice and paten dated 1889, an older lidded chalice doubling as a paten, a silver alms dish presented by the Hon Mrs Mills in 1842 and a large pewter flagon. The

punched brass alms dish represents the two faithful spies conveying a bunch of grapes and other fruits from the Promised Land. Many of these dishes were made in South Germany in the 15th to 17th centuries. They are difficult to date precisely.

Note the colourful **KNEELERS** worked by members of the congregation. The vestments are modern but Victorian embroidery has been remounted on a red burse and veil and on a purple stole. The commissioned **WALL HANGING** at the west end, by Ruth Simmons, appropriately features the crossed keys of St Peter as part of a Chi-Rho which also incorporates a shepherd's crook together with a shoal of fishes.

The attractive **CANDELABRA** were made in 1974 by William Cobb, a Stutton resident. Electric light was installed in 1930, a succession of oil lamps had been used before this.

RECORDS are complete from 1645 and are lodged with the County Record Office. In 1646, Thomas, first son of William Lord Fairfax was baptised here. In 1789, Mary, wife of James Sewell was buried in linen and paid a penalty of £5 as directed by Act of Parliament (designed to protect the dying wool trade). The first rector known to be appointed was Vincent le Faucun in 1165 when the parish was in the diocese of Norwich. The patronage has passed through at least five local families since then and now rests with the Bishop of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich. No longer do we have a curate as in the last century, we are joined to neighbouring Brantham as one living. In 1818 there was licence from the Bishop of Norwich for the incumbent to be nonresident.

Do now step into the **CHURCHYARD**. This was enlarged in 1908 and gravestones in front of the south side were removed about 30 years ago to give the pleasing open appearance. Two Saxon pots made in Ipswich on the south side of Carr Street during the 7-9th centuries were unearthed in 1895. They are now in the Ipswich museum. Part of the churchyard is cut in the traditional way to encourage wild flowers.

Notice the Reade table tomb on the south side and runic stone let into the

lower part of the south buttress. The east window of the vestry has Norman ornament. A florinated **CONSECRATION CROSS** is inserted in the east wall of the chancel, beneath the window. This is one of two found during the 19th century alterations.

SOURCES:

Churchwardens' accounts

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