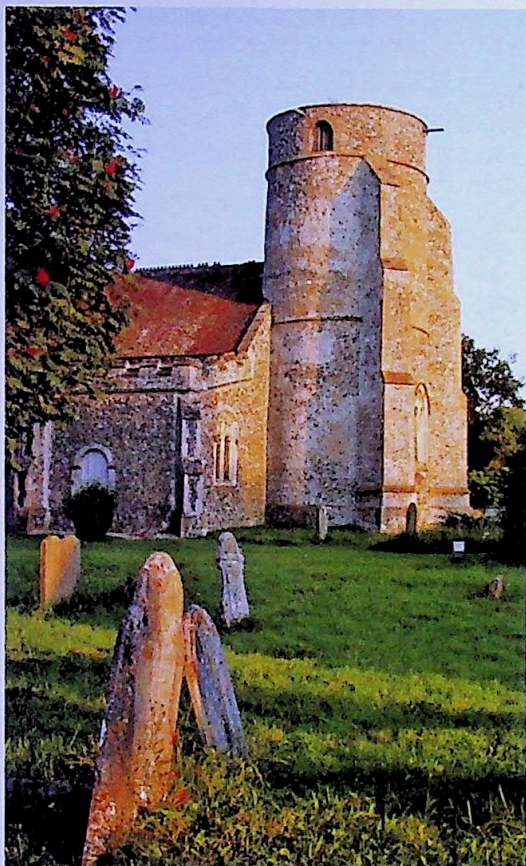


*All Saints' Church Beyton  
and its Parish*



£2.00

# WELCOME TO ALL SAINTS!

## Introduction

People have worshipped God on this site for over 1,000 years and today, although the church has greatly changed over the centuries, it is still an active centre of Christian worship – the purpose for which it was built.

We hope that you will enjoy exploring its beauty and interest and will feel at home here in our Father's House. It has been a place of prayer over the centuries and we trust that you will pray before you leave. Remember the priest and people who use and care for this church today, and who have the task of handing it on, intact and well used for future generations.

## Beyton

In years gone by, Beyton has been known as Begatona and Beighton. The village is on what was the old A45 road (the new A45 is now the A14), about five miles from Bury St Edmunds. It has some attractive houses and a picturesque village green.

The church of All Saints' stands sedately away from the village centre, on higher ground, on the road to Hessett. It is worth pausing to enjoy the setting of this pretty wayside church in its trim and cared-for churchyard, its grey flint-rubble walls presenting a variety of mellow colours and textures.

The church is now part of the Benefice of Rougham, Beyton & Hessett, and Rushbrooke in the Diocese of St Edmundsbury & Ipswich and in the Deanery of Lavenham.

## History

Significantly, the 43.5 ft high tower commands extensive views towards the North-east, down the valley of the Beyton brook to the Blackbourne stream and Thetford. For, at the time the massive round tower was constructed, the threat to the Saxon farming folk at Beighton came from the river valleys extending away to Thetford and the Wash. In late Saxon times the danger was acute. In the year 937 King Athelstan ordered his thegns (*thane – one who in Anglo-Saxon times held land of the king or other superior military service*) to build bell towers on their estates, to watch and ward off Norse invasion.

In those parts of Norfolk and Suffolk exposed to the fury of the Norsemen, some of these strong defensive towers still stand. Almost indistinguishable from later Norman Towers, they generally lack the characteristic arcading and exhibit a more careful setting of the individual flints in the thick rubble walls.



Originally the only means of access was the tiny opening halfway up the tower, approached by a ladder. Our tower access is still gained only by a ladder, but openings for the West window and the tower arch into the nave have been cut since more settled times have come to Beyton.

The eccentric oval plan of the tower is a result of the customary casual way of laying out foundations in Saxon times; however, such towers are still known as 'round towers'. The fears of the king and people were amply justified in this period, for as well as the harrying of innumerable settlements and villages at this time the strong towns of Ipswich, Norwich, Thetford and Colchester were all plundered and burnt between 1000 and 1010. Athelstan's orders to build in stone are thus made clear. Although the Domesday Book does not mention a church here, it is probable that there was a little church of wattle and thatch which might burn with the cottages of the village – but the impatient marauders would not want to deal with the '*feste burg*' (*'safe stronghold' as in Luther's famous hymn*). The final success of the Norsemen is imprinted on our history with their settlements at Risby, Stowlangtoft, Ixworth Thorpe, Thorpe Morieux and elsewhere.

If the little Saxon church was not destroyed in these troubled times it was certainly replaced in Norman times by a stone church. Of this building, all we see today is the plain Norman doorway in the North aisle, but probably Norman masonry and certainly all their rubble walls were re-used in the mediaeval improvements which were made piecemeal over the centuries.

Fears that the heavy tower might fall and bring down the church in ruins, as happened at Thurston, prompted the addition of the massive buttresses at the North-west and South-west of the tower in the Middle Ages. Beyton is very proud to be warden of one of only two buttressed round tower churches in England, the other being at Ramsholt, to the East of Woodbridge.

These fragments of past glory sadden us as we try to visualize the vanished beauty of this House of God, but also fill us with thankfulness for those who have struggled against decay and disinterest to preserve this oft-changed building for us.

For over a thousand years the people of this parish have come by the many ancient footpaths and lanes that converge on the church. The records of this parish, commencing from 1540, impress the reader with their quiet continuity and the charitable care of the people by the several rectors who themselves grow old, feeble at writing and then pass from the scene. Up to two centuries ago the self-sufficiency of the village was remarkable, with over forty different trades and professions recorded in the registers.



We have evidence of this being a close-knit community, when John Jermyn, who in October 1751, was thrown into Newgate prison under sentence of death for the rescue of James Holt, a smuggler. Jermyn's village friends and his neighbours, from Beyton and Thurston, petitioned for mercy on his behalf, pleading his honest industry at his livelihood as hurdle (temporary wattle-fencing) and broom-maker.

The local gentry employed village men and their daughters as bailiffs and stewards, gardeners, grooms, footmen, coachmen and servants. Farmers employed the majority, enabling them to earn their daily bread and drink. The local wheat and barley and attendant stock were cared for in turn by labourer and maltster, vintner and cooper, publican and waiter, aided by miller and grocer, victualler and butcher, shopkeeper and draper.



The solitary shepherd, a relic of less happy times when village men lost their livelihood to make room for sheep, brought an annual 'tribute' to Beyton Rectory. It was a white and black fleece from the Rougham flock, in accordance with a Terrier (*a register of landed property and the rent roll etc.*) of 1706.



The neat plastered cottages gave work in erection and maintenance to builder and sawyer, carpenter and lathe-riever, thatcher, glazier and painter. The demands of comfort and cleanliness within called for cabinet-maker and broom-maker. Great wains on the farms busied wheelwright, blacksmith and carters. Calling at the cottage doors were the hawker, the jobber and the chimney-sweep. All had to be shod, and walked on the shoe-maker's handiwork.

Also resident here were an assistant schoolmaster, an Officer of Excise, a soldier and the occasional pensioner, all faithfully recorded by the ministering clerk or cleric.

## HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE CHURCH BUILDING

All Saints is the proud possessor of one of Suffolk's forty-four existing round towers, and, although the tower has been so greatly altered over the years that dating it is difficult, there is evidence to suggest that its core may be Saxon - probably over one thousand years old.

The later flint facing, and the two sturdy buttresses, also of later date, give the tower a slightly odd appearance, which is accentuated by the very short belfry stage, with its three single windows lined with white Woolpit brick. On the Southside is a blocked ringing-chamber window. Inside, this window has a triangular head, which is another Saxon feature. A stone near the northern window bears the date 1780, when this stage was rebuilt, probably replacing a taller and better proportioned belfry stage.

We know that there was a stone church here in Norman times because its doorway survives on the North side. The building, like most ancient churches has undergone many changes and improvements as new fashions in architecture and liturgy developed.

We can see from its windows that the chancel was restored in the opening years of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. During the 15<sup>th</sup> century the whole church underwent a facelift when the perpendicular windows were inserted in the nave; the tower received its west window, buttresses and arch, and the porch was built. A bequest was made in 1445 towards the 'raising' of the church - so perhaps the work was taking place then.

The South porch has a tall and elegant 15<sup>th</sup> century entrance arch; its responds (*half pillars at the sides*) have concave surfaces. The inner entrance arch is probably late 14<sup>th</sup> century.

In 1480 another donor left ten shillings (*50 pence*) to the 'stooling' of the church, indicating that the interior was being furnished with new seats.

After the Reformation much of the mediaeval colour and carving (*which served as teaching aids to the mediaeval folk who could not read*) was swept away and the fabric of the church deteriorated somewhat during the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Later that century, the building was in such a bad state of repair that four of its five bells had to be sold so that the building could be put right. The trouble may have been in the tower itself, because its short belfry stage was rebuilt in 1780.

When David Elisha Davy visited and wrote about the church in 1811, the interior was furnished with sets of uniform box-pews and the Royal Arms of George III hung over the tower arch demonstrating loyalty to the Crown. The communion table was railed in on three sides and above it were the Lord's Prayer and Creed, with the Ten Commandments on two tablets flanking the East window.

David Elisha Davy paid a second visit in 1840 and noted that in 1834 a West gallery had been erected and the seats had been rearranged. Nonetheless, in 1853 the fabric had again reached such a poor state that it was decided that the nave should be almost entirely rebuilt. It was possibly around this time that the very adequate heating system was installed – a system of warm air through gratings in the aisles, originally using coal or similar fuel, and converted to oil at a later date.

The North wall, which had previously needed propping up, was totally demolished, and a new North aisle was built, which provided much needed extra seating. The South wall was greatly restored, the obtrusive gallery was removed and the box-pews were replaced by benches. The two-light perpendicular windows in the nave are reproductions of those in place before the 1854 restoration. Funds would not stretch to removing the tower buttresses.

The architect for this work was John Johnson of Bury St Edmunds, who also restored nearby Rougham Church, and the contractor was H.Reed. The North aisle is a very worthy addition to the church. It has an embattled parapet, elegant buttresses and two-light perpendicular windows. The plain Norman doorway from the demolished nave wall has a semi-circular arch, with a frieze of simple moulding.

The foundation stone was laid by P.Bennett MP in August 1853 and the church was re-opened in June 1854. During the restoration the stonework of the windows was greatly renewed, but the style of the originals was strictly adhered to.



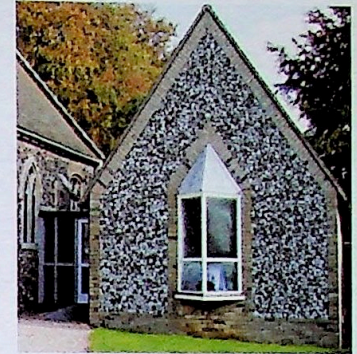
In 1884, the Reverend Herbert Samuel Hawkins (*Rector 1855-1895*) had the chancel restored and transformed at his own expense. The small existing chancel was lengthened by about 13 feet and was given a grand fine oak roof, which is panelled and supported by arch braces. It rests upon stone foliage corbels and has angels with shields on the

cornices at the tops of the walls. He also put in new floors and furnishings and a new East window and reredos, both designed by a man named Powell of Whitefriars in London. Much of the stonework of its windows has been carefully renewed. The carved corbel heads which flank the East window appear to be mediaeval and could have been re-set when the new East wall was built.

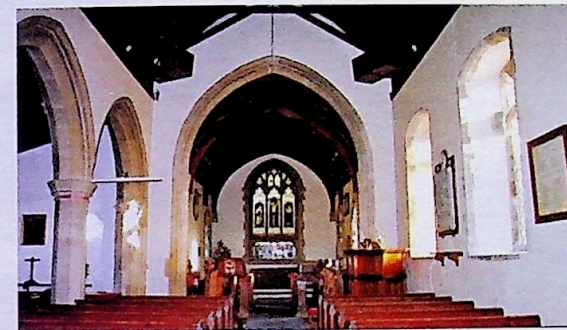


The architect for this restoration was Sir Arthur Blomfield (*one of the most prolific 19<sup>th</sup> century architects, who designed many fine new churches all over England*). The contractor was Mr Thompson of Peterborough. The chancel was re-dedicated by the Bishop of Ely in December 1884.

This left the church structurally much as we see it today, although a great deal has been done during the 20<sup>th</sup> century to improve it, the major work being the addition of the vestry in 1973 designed by Whitworth, Hall and Thomas. The two doors at the front and rear of the annex were required by the planners, as the vestry is built across a footpath. This vestry was extended in 1992 to the design of Whitworth & Co. Partnership. The church walls were cleaned and re-painted in July 1994, and funds were raised at the turn of the century to provide floodlighting in celebration of the new Millennium



So we see that over its long history this sacred building has been tended and cherished by many generations of Beyton people. On occasions, the church has been allowed to fall into disrepair; but when the people have seen the need to proclaim God's love, they have restored and re-beautified the building. Beyton people are still justly proud of their church.



The interior is bright, cared for and feels lived-in. Although most of the craftsmanship that we see here today is 19<sup>th</sup> century or later, much of this work is very worthy and several features remain from earlier years.

On the tower wall is fixed a cast plaque recording that the Incorporated Church Building Society gave a grant of £20 towards the 1853 restoration, on condition that seats be reserved free for the poorer inhabitants (*those who could not afford to pay rent for a pew of their own*). The ceiling above has a 15<sup>th</sup> century wooden frame, including an arch-braced tie-beam across the centre.

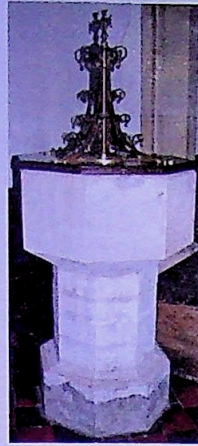
The tower contains one bell, cast by John Draper in 1627, but it cannot be rung as the wooden frame is no longer safe. The tower arch, with its semi-circular responds is particularly elegant and pleasing 15<sup>th</sup> century work.

The aisle is separated from the nave by a 19<sup>th</sup> century arcade of three bays. The responds of the chancel arch have concave sides, similar to those in the porch entrance.

The octagonal font (*placed at the West end near the entrance, to symbolize our entry through Holy Baptism into the Christian family*), is unusually plain, but it is clearly mediaeval and may well be 14<sup>th</sup> century.



The nave, the aisle roofs, and the benches, date from the 1853-54 restoration. The 19th century oak pulpit has delicate leaf carvings which have been incorporated into the lent altar frontal designed and made by church members. The lower panels are interesting as they are formed from strips of walnut joined by tiny dovetail keys.



The beautiful choir stalls are a great treasure of the church, showing fine craftsmanship of the late 15<sup>th</sup> century and of 1884. The front seats and the book-rests are largely original and may have been part of the 'stooling' for which the money (*10 shillings*), was left in 1480. These have

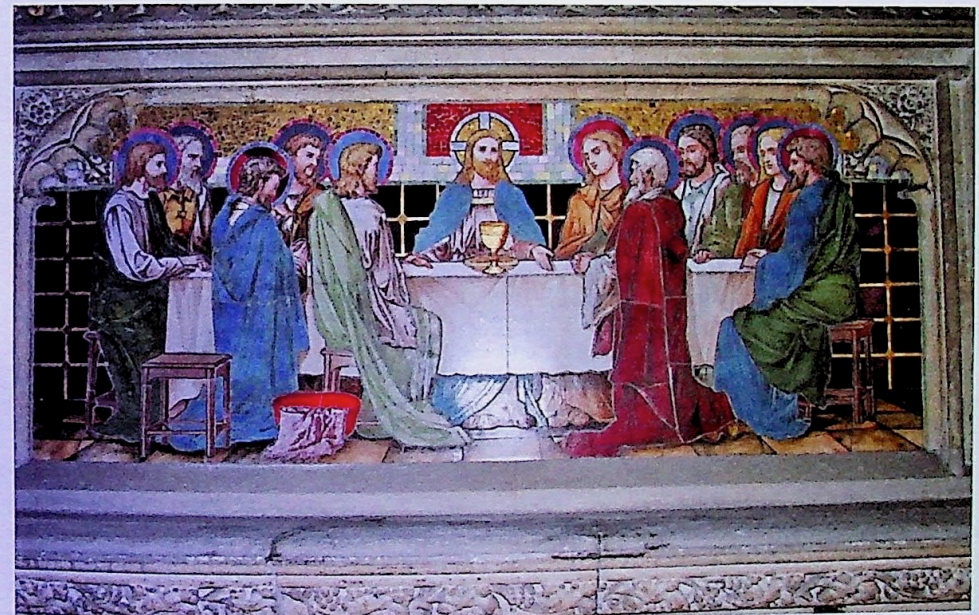
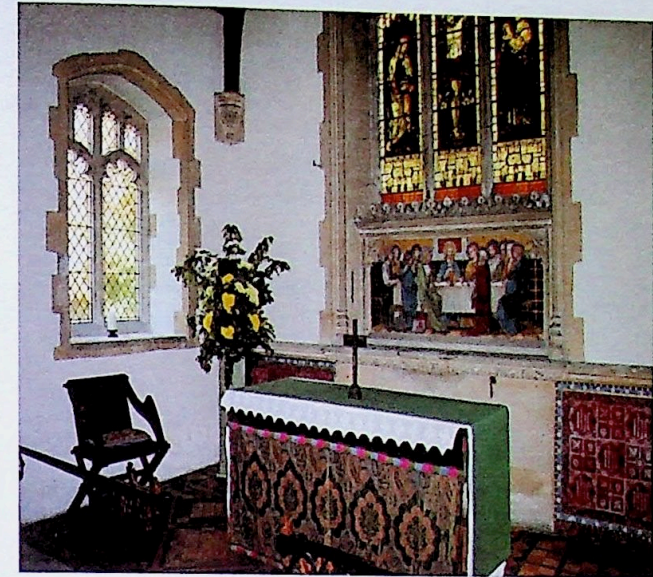
beautifully traceried eastern ends, with poppy-heads, to which have been skillfully fixed carved figures to replace lost mediaeval ones; the southern figure is a unicorn and the northern one a pelican (*these are both ancient symbols of our Lord*). The bench backs are beautifully carved as are the book-rests. The back of the northern bench has quatrefoils with shields bearing various initials.

The 19<sup>th</sup> century stalls are carved to match the mediaeval ones. Their ends display the emblems of the Evangelists; on the south the Angel of St Matthew (*the emblem of the 'Divine Man' was assigned to St Matthew in ancient times because his Gospel teaches us about the human nature of Christ*), the winged Lion of St Mark (*the ancient symbol refers to his Gospel which informs us of the royal dignity of Christ*), and on the north, the winged Ox of St Luke (*this is a reference to his Gospel which deals with the sacrificial aspects of Christ's life*) and the rising Eagle of St John (*this ancient symbol was assigned to St John because his gaze pierced further into the mysteries of Heaven than that of any other man*).



In the south wall of the sanctuary is a 14<sup>th</sup> century piscine - Latin for fish-pond – a perforated stone basin for carrying away the ablutions, also used to wash the Eucharistic vessels and minister's fingers after the communion. Nowadays, this water is consumed by the celebrating priest

The altar is the Stuart Communion Table upon which the Holy Eucharist (*Communion*) has been offered since the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Above it is the colourful mosaic reredos showing the Last Supper but with Judas absent, designed by Powell in 1884 at his Whitefriars works in London. He also designed and made the East window, showing Christ crucified, flanked by his mother and St John.



Amongst the other stained glass in the church may be seen small 19<sup>th</sup> century panels showing the pelican and the Lamb of God emblems in the South-east window of the nave.

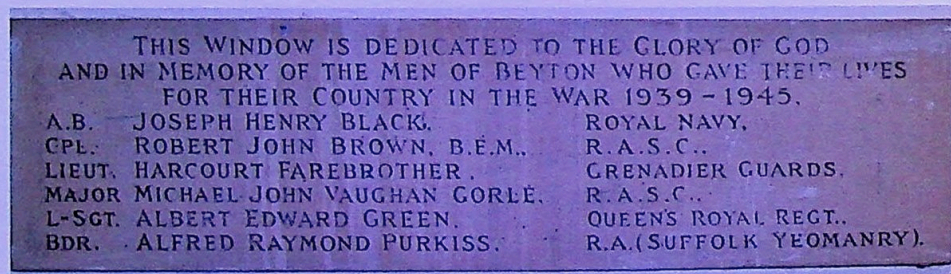


The Eastern window in the North aisle is Beyton's memorial to those who died in World War II showing our Lord and a British soldier.

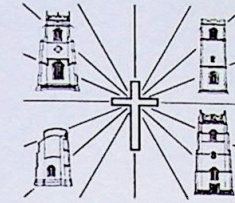


There is beautiful modern glass in the central window of the aisle. Its theme is the Sower, and it shows a farming scene with several birds to be seen in the locality. The glass is by Goddard & Gibbs and is in memory of Frederick Hammond, who lived at the Grange from 1919–1967.

Two central wall plaques in the chancel commemorate members of the Walpole family, who lived at Beyton House and owned much of the land in the parish. Another plaque in the nave commemorates those of the parish who died in WWI.



On the South aisle wall is a list of Rectors of Beyton which is complete from 1249 to 1482, and from 1539 to the present day.



This Parish became a United Parish with Hessett in 1983. The United Benefice of Rougham with Rushbrooke, Beyton & Hessett was created by Order in Council in 1991.

This guide was compiled from documents issued and written by Roy Tricker, G. Oxborrow and previous Pastors of All Saints Church.

The guide was updated and edited by Barbara Jones, and reprinted in March 2013 to include photographs by Thomas Critchlow and Barbara Jones.

