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ST MARY'S ALDHAM - THE DETECTORISTS' CHURCH



SOUVENIR BOOKET

purchasing this booklet helps keep St Mary's open, you are making a difference

Welcome to our beautiful church and thank you so much for purchasing this souvenir booklet about St Mary's and the time it was home to the BBC series "The Detectorists"

This church has stood since Saxon times because of the generosity of people like you. Thank you.

If you don't have cash, or if the card machine is out of order, please make a one off donation by calling the Parish Giving Service on 0333 002 1260 and quote the reference: Aldham – 330633049

DETECTORISTS

The



The STORY



Because you are reading this, you are probably a fan of the BBC series "Detectorists". The iconic opening sequence and many of the exterior scenes were filmed in the churchyard and the meadows. St. Mary's is the round tower church that was such a prominent feature of the second series.

The church's involvement first began when William Crockatt, the owner of the surrounding land, received a telephone call from the BBC Detectorists location manager. He explained that he was looking for a round-towered Saxon church as required by the script, in a farmland location that was needed for exterior scenes, and that St. Mary's was very suitable. Agreement was reached about the use of the land, and the farmyard for vehicle parking. A generous donation was also made to church funds for the use of the churchyard.

Keeping St Mary's open for the future

CREW & LOGISTICS

In early July 2015, a substantial number of vehicles arrived and parked in the yard behind the farm buildings immediately to the north of the churchyard.



The cast and production team had their headquarters in a room in Aldham Hall, which lies on the far side of Church Lane from the farm buildings – the Hall incidentally featured as the mayor's house from which he emerged in one episode.

Most of the cast and crew stayed overnight in vacant student accommodation in Ipswich. This was convenient not only for Aldham, but also for Framlingham (where village scenes were filmed) and Wantisden, where the scene of the priest fleeing with the church valuables was shot, though all the subsequent exterior scenes were filmed at Aldham..



FILMING

The production team was at pains to keep people in the locality informed about the shooting schedule, leaflets being put through letterboxes, and they were always willing to answer questions put to them. Watching the cast and crew at work was an enjoyable experience.

What became apparent fairly quickly was the enormous amount of time taken to set up and film each scene, which was later edited down to what you see on screen. An example of this is the hunting down of the fleeing priest, involving several horses and their armoured riders and an entire afternoon's filming.



Some of the locations of the various exterior scenes can be seen from the churchyard – the meadow to the west, the field beyond the hedge line to the south where the monk buried the valuables. Some are reasonably accessible by public footpath, from which the locations may be viewed. Visitors are however respectfully reminded not to stray onto private land, where some of the scenes were filmed.



STARS, HORSES & DRONES

The original Parish Magazine article...



On 6th July a film crew of 50 people plus 30 actors arrived at Aldham Hall to begin filming series two of *Detectorists*. The series is the brainchild of Mackenzie Crook of *The Office* and *Pirates of the Caribbean* fame. He wrote, stars and directs, which is a huge responsibility. He is himself a keen detectorist and has turned his hobby into his work.



The crew and 50 vehicles arrived and arranged themselves in the farmyard, completely filling it. They plumbed in the essentials, the "honey wagon" (mobile lavatory), the catering van for three chefs, along with giant pantechnicons for wardrobe, production office, make-up, electrical department, props, set design, camera crew and security. All of these were wired up to a large generator.



Filming took place in two principal locations, the most important of which – "ground zero" - was on the meadows at Aldham Hall with the church as a backdrop. Having no previous experience of the film industry, I was surprised how laborious it is and how much equipment is required. There were numerous takes of two actors together, walking and talking towards the camera. Then the camera films each actor in turn doing the exact same scene. Then all the equipment is moved and the whole scene is shot again but from behind, multiple times. Moving all the vehicles, easy-up tents, actors, sound, camera and electrical equipment takes thirty minutes at least.



The biggest problem for open air filming is lighting. When filming multiple takes of the same scene, you cannot have one character speaking in sunshine and the other in cloud. The cameraman and director spent hours gazing into the sky trying to estimate how long they had to wait for clouds to move away from the sun and filming to resume. Who knew?



On two occasions an opticopter was brought in to film from the air. This is a large drone carrying a camera. It can only be used in wind speeds of less than 12 mph and is a rather temperamental machine with a mind of its own, prone to disappear without permission and crash land occasionally. We were all forced to shelter at the edge of a wood for safety's sake.



For the 2 night shoots on the Sandy Hill, the crew hired a fifty tonne crane and hoisted a bank of huge searchlights 130 feet in the air to bathe the whole hillside in a soft light meant to mimic moonlight. It was a still, warm night and I sat with cast and crew on the hillside watching filming until 12.30 am. They carried on and "wrapped" at 4.30am.

Curiously, on night shoots the first meal of the day is at 7pm and is called breakfast and everyone says good morning to each other. Hot food (lunch) was carried to the field in trucks and served at 1.30 in the morning.



On the last evening of filming a small crowd of locals watched a storm scene being filmed at Aldham Church. A rain and lightning machine were brought in and I don't suppose it would be giving away too much of the plot to say we felt very sorry for the "monk" who was rained on continuously for two hours in various different locations. Later we discovered he was wearing a wetsuit underneath his cloak!

I suppose what we learned from the whole experience is how incredibly expensive it is to film just three hours' worth of programme screen time and that if they are lucky, a whole day's filming produces just 5 minutes of a finished programme. They all work incredibly hard and very long hours and it's not remotely glamorous!

DETECTORISTS



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Welcome to Aldham Parish Church:

The present Church was built around 1350, although the lower part of the tower is of Norman workmanship. The Church consists of a west round tower, nave with south porch and chancel. There is a notable absence of dressed stone in the building; flints, pebble and rubble from the neighbourhood being used. Essential angles were made up with parts of ancient coffin lids, boulders and tiles.

By 1769 the Church was in a sad state of repair, and two of the three bells were sold to obtain funds for building two unsightly brick buttresses against the south wall of the nave to prevent its collapse.

A report on the Church fabric in 1881. stated that the building was as near a ruin as one actually in use could be. Over the next decade extensive restoration was carried out. More than half the tower was taken down and rebuilt, the south wall of the nave, with the exception of the southwest angle, was demolished, new foundations laid and a new wall built. A fine new roof of pitch pine was put over the nave, the chancel arch erected, and all the windows either restored or renovated. In 1933 there was further restoration of the interior. The east window was erected, wood block flooring was laid throughout; pulpit, choir stalls and pews to match the existing 15th century woodwork were provided and the 16th century arch to the tower was exposed.

The fine medieval woodwork includes the oak lectern, three bench ends and several poppy heads, which together with the poppy heads of 1933 offer a wealth of varying designs. Incorporated in one of the window jambs on the south side of the nave is a fragment of a cross shaft which is reputedly of pre-Norman origin; another is to be found outside, near the south side of the tower.

The Royal Arms over the tower arch are those of George 11 and the arms of Elizabeth 11 hang on the north wall of the nave.

During the 1970s repairs have been carried out to the tower, porch, north wall and chancel windows, and the Hanoverian Arms restored.

REMNANT OF 13th CENTURY GRAVESTONE

The gravestone has been dated, (archaeologically), as late thirteenth century.

It was removed from the terrace at Priory Farm, (by kind permission of Mr James Buckle), to prevent further deterioration by weather and damage by being walked on.

Made of Purbeck marble, a stone found only in Dorset, its carved edge mouldings suggest that it was carved by Dorset craftsmen and shipped to Suffolk as a finished product.

Complete, it would have been 6-7 ft long and would have formed the top of a coffin or, more likely, have laid on top of an earth grave.

The expense of such a stone points to it being for a person, cleric or lay, of considerable wealth and standing. This may mean that at some time Aldham Priory was a prestigious establishment.

The gravestone is positioned against the wall in the north-east corner the churchyard.

Pamela Oldroyd