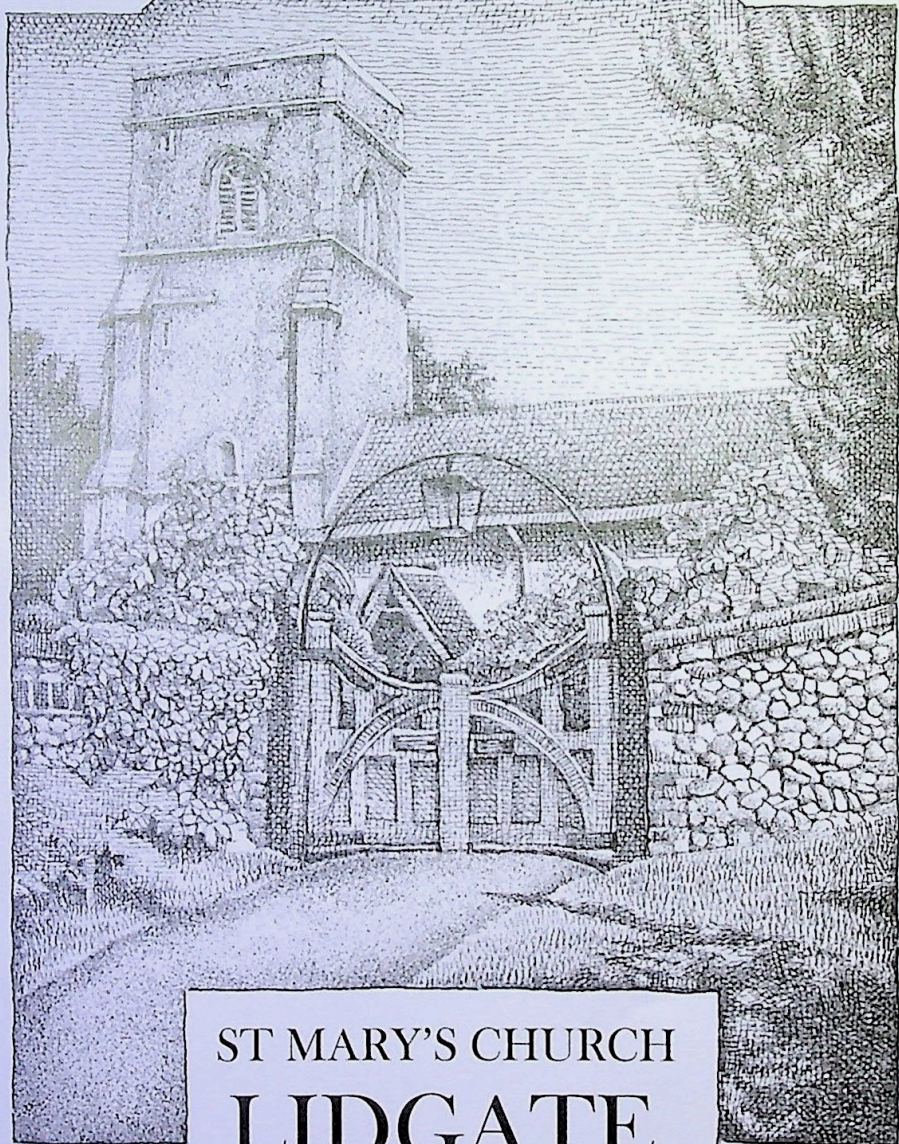


A GUIDE TO

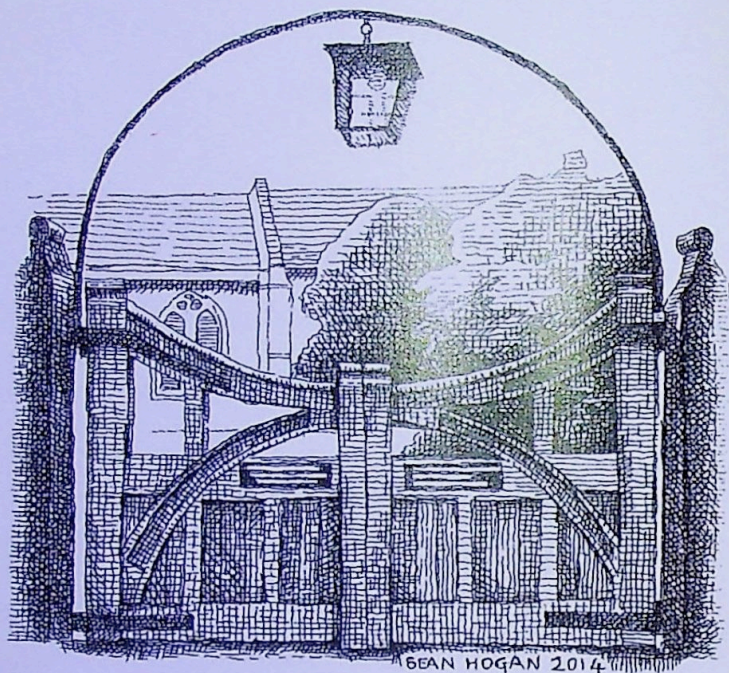


ST MARY'S CHURCH
LIDGATE

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THE MEMORIAL GATES



The gates, by which you entered the churchyard, are dedicated to the children of the late Major General Richard Dewing, MC, DSO. The family lived at the Old Rectory during World War Two and later. The General was head of the Supreme Headquarters, Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF) Mission to Denmark leading to its liberation. Later he was a member of the Allied Control Commission, Berlin in 1945. The Danes sent food parcels to Lidgate and the General, as a token of thanks, was presented with a wayward horse called Lilliput.



WELCOME....

... to St. Mary's church, Lidgate, which is magnificently set in a commanding position on a knoll overlooking its village and the surrounding countryside. It stands within one of the baileys of a motte and bailey castle and the north side of the churchyard is bounded by what was part of the outer moat. To the north-east of the churchyard is a rectangular moated space where once stood the castle keep, and nearby is part of an ancient wall thought to be part of a gatehouse to the castle and the only standing remnant of Lidgate castle.

This is in fact a very early site, where evidence of Roman occupation has been discovered and even earlier since a Mesolithic tranche axe (now in Bury museum) and a bronze age axe head have been found. Little remains of the castle today - one 19th century writer states that its foundations were dug up to repair the local roads. A man in armour was dug up in 19th century as well as steps and a passageway but he was reburied and the passage filled in by orders of the local farmer.

St. Mary's serves an attractive village, set along the B 1063 road from Newmarket to Clare. There are several picturesque houses and cottages, and the lane leading to the church joins the main road by the bailey pond.

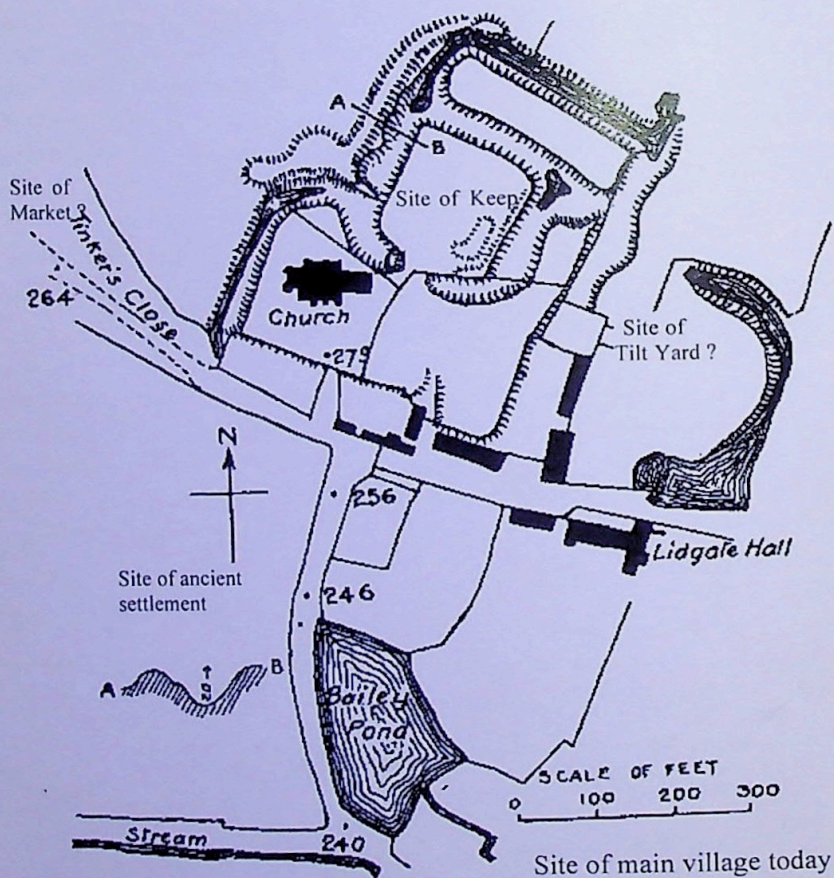
The present building has been a centre for Christian worship and witness for at least 900 years but its origins go back into Anglo-Saxon times. It is still in regular use for the purpose for which it was built and is one of seven churches in the Bansfield Benefice. Here we see craftsmanship of many periods - from the 1200s down to our own day, as generations of Lidgate folk of different historical periods and Christian traditions have altered, enlarged and beautified it. Compared with the other churches in the benefice, St. Mary's is the least adorned. This may be due to the absentee Lords of the Manor and the general poverty that beset the village after the decline of the castle. St. Mary's was nearly destroyed in World War Two by bombs targeting the nearby dummy airfield. Luckily none exploded.

Please feel at home here in our Father's house and explore its features of interest. Please pray for the priest and people whose spiritual home it is, and who would be very grateful for any contributions that visitors and pilgrims can spare to help them maintain their ancient church, intact and beautiful, for the glory of God and for future generations to use and to enjoy.

MAY ALMIGHTY GOD BLESS AND KEEP YOU.

ORIENTATION

To help you get your bearings the plan below shows the church situated in one of the baileys of the Norman castle. The present church developed from the original Norman church after the castle fell into decline in the 1260s



LANDMARKS IN THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE SITE

PREHISTORY

St. Mary's church stands on a site going back to the Bronze Age and it is situated in an ideal defensive position. There may, therefore, have been worship of God on this site going back into the mists of time.

ROMAN TIMES

The site of a Roman villa was discovered S.E. of the village in 1970. It may be that Christian worship was held there after the toleration of Christianity in 315. There is evidence that there was a Roman settlement on Church Hill (perhaps garrisoned). Roman bricks are incorporated into the Church and still turn up on site and in the surrounding meadows.

THE SO CALLED DARK AGES

The settlement of the Angles and Saxons in this area lead to the naming of the village. Their conversion to Christianity would surely have entailed a building for worship however simple. The great invasion of the Vikings in the 9th century lead to the martyrdom of St. Edmund near Bury St. Edmunds and the growth in prestige of the abbey. John de Lydgate, the poet, attests that Lidgate was once a famous castle town which the Danes destroyed at the time of Edmund's martyrdom in 870. A fragment of stone held at the archaeological society's offices at Bury may well be part of a baluster of a belfry belonging to a previous Saxon church (There is a photo at the end of this booklet)

THE CASTLE AND ITS LORDS OF THE MANOR

William the Conqueror eventually recognised Bury abbey's traditional rights (granted by Edward the Confessor) over the 'Liberty of St Edmund', the administrative district that covered much of W. Suffolk. It included the Manor of Lidgate which became linked with the office of Steward of the abbey - this involved the good governance of the Liberty and maintenance of law and order. (The equivalent of the secular Sheriff) The castle may have had its moments in the time of the civil war between King Stephen and Empress Matilda in the 1140s. During the Barons' War with King Henry III in the 1260s Sir Henry de Hastynge, the local Lord, played a notable part. During this period the castle reached its ultimate strength and building work on the church increased.

AFTER THE CASTLE

Building materials from the disused castle were used to develop the chancel further. The tower was added to the other end of the old Norman nave in about 1290 and thirty years or so later the north and south aisles were added. It is likely that the doorway from the old church was reused as the present entrance to the church. There are no grand tombs of the Lords in the church. Some descendants of Sir Henry were minors and administration passed for awhile to the Crown and later Lords; the Nevills, Davers, Cottons and Manners being absentees they were probably too grand to be concerned with a village declining into poverty. Foundations of the castle were still being dug up in 19th century to make up the roads.

WHAT TO SEE OUTSIDE THE CHURCH

We will begin our tour looking at features outside the Church

SETTING. The church is set in a commanding position situated in one of the outer baileys of the castle. Although now sedately aloof from the present village there is evidence of the earlier settlement in the meadow opposite the church gates. In the opposite field of Lidgate Hall a market was held. You can see across to the site of Kirtling Castle some four miles away, captured by Henry de Hastynges in the Baronial Wars of the 1260s and to Dalham Hall, once owned by Cecil Rhodes.

BUILDING MATERIALS. The flint rubble of which the church is composed is typical of this area where flint is in abundance. The whole building would once have been lime washed. The nave and chancel roofs are tiled whilst the roofs of the aisles are leaded. Unusually the chancel is higher than the nave - perhaps a clerestory was originally intended. In many English churches the chancel (as here) shows different and often earlier craftsmanship than the rest of the building because its maintenance was the responsibility of the Rector, whilst the parishioners (including the Lord of the Manor) had the care of the other parts of the church.

THE TOWER is nicely proportioned and grew during the opening years of the 14th century. The angle buttresses, which strengthen its corners, give it the impression of strength and solidity. In the south-west corner we can see where the spiral staircase ascends the tower and small rectangular windows which give it light. The west window is in the Decorated style of the early 14th century. The ringing chamber has small single windows and the two - light belfry windows have simple cusped "Y" tracery. The tower is crowned by a plain parapet, beneath which on the south side is a gargoyle, which throws rainwater clear of the walls. In the tower can just be made out several put-logs in which scaffolding was placed during the tower building. The tower contains two bells, three others were sold earlier in 20th century. Both were made by John Draper of Thetford in 1624 - 5. The treble bell weighs 4 ½ cwt and is 28 inches in diameter and the tenor, which has a diameter of almost 30 inches, weighs 5 ¼ cwt.

THE GRAVEYARD. To the south and the east of the church are several attractive 17th/18th century headstones. The line of yew trees marks the boundary with the new graveyard which opened in 1893. Go round the back of the church to see the very deep moat separating the bailey from the central platform that housed the castle keep. The unmarked burial place of George Pulham who was hanged in 1835 for burning down Pippin Park Farm is probably in this grassed area. Look out for the headstone in the new section commemorating John Brunning, the shepherd, who died in his sheepfold. A former Rector of Kirtling is buried here. He was a great huntsman and it is said that after his burial a fox was seen sitting on his grave ! By the entrance gate the headstone of Sampson Bell, farmer at Croypley Grove and Victualler at the Royal Oak Inn and the Red House. The fragment of an ivy covered wall may be part of the boundary wall between the graveyard and the other bailey - it may also form part of the gateway to the causeway across the moat to the motte of the castle.

THE NORTH AND SOUTH AISLES were built probably between 1320 - 30 A.D. when most of the original Norman church was demolished. This provided more space within the church for processions and for village social functions before the introduction of benches. They are lit by two - light windows in the Decorated style with elegant tracery (some of which have been carefully and sympathetically renewed). The north aisle has a 14th century doorway, with graffito scratched into its jambs (sides). The two-light window west of the porch was added a little later in the 14th century and the three - lightest window of the south aisle is 15th century.

SCRATCH DIALS. If you look carefully you may be able to make out a couple of scratch dials on one of the south facing buttresses. These were sundials that marked the time of mass.

THE CHANCEL WINDOWS indicate the older age of this part of the church - the fast introduction in the early 1200s of the new Early English style window. Two have been replaced on the south side by the later Decorated style. The three lancet windows in the north wall remain intact. The Priest's door on the south side is of the same age. The three - light Decorated east window appears to be entirely 19th century.

ROMAN BRICKS can be detected in the walls of the north side of the church. It is likely that at some stage that there was some form Roman occupation on this site - perhaps a small garrison.

THE SOUTH PORCH is a humble piece of 18th century workmanship. The height of the roof of its medieval predecessor may be seen outlined on the aisle wall above it. In the porch marriage vows were exchanged, babies welcomed before christening, women churched after childbirth, penitents reconciled and contracts signed. The Holy Water stoup with which worshippers signed themselves to remind themselves of their baptism on entering the church has disappeared. The doorway is unusual. This has a pointed 14th century arch, but above the door is a horizontal lintel and tympanum (a distinctly Norman feature) indicating that parts of it may well have come from the doorway to the older Norman church. Note the random graffito on the door jambs.



WHAT TO SEE INSIDE THE CHURCH

The interior of St. Mary's is full of craftsmanship of several periods. Work of the 19th and 20th centuries takes its place alongside that of past ages. This is of the highest quality and it blends well with the older features. The atmosphere of antiquity is enhanced by the brick floors and it soon becomes clear that there is a gentle slope upwards towards the east. Above all, the building feels greatly lived - in and prayed - in.

It is uncluttered as there are no memorial tombs of medieval gentry. With the end of the castle the village gradually fell into poverty due to absentee landlords

THE WESTERN DOORWAY into the tower indicates that the original nave is much earlier than the tower as there is no tower arch which would be normal. This has a handsome continuously - moulded 14th century arch and it contains its original medieval door with strap hangings. The walls inside the tower are covered with interesting graffiti.

THE FONT stands before the western doorway and is a plain octagonal one (early 15th century). It is made of the chalky stone known as clunch. Even here the graffiti carvers have been at work. Rather strange grooves have been carved in the base that are difficult to interpret. The font - cover is also of considerable age.



THE NAVE ARCADES replaced the walls of the older church when the aisles were expanded. They have moulded capitals and bases to their octagonal piers.

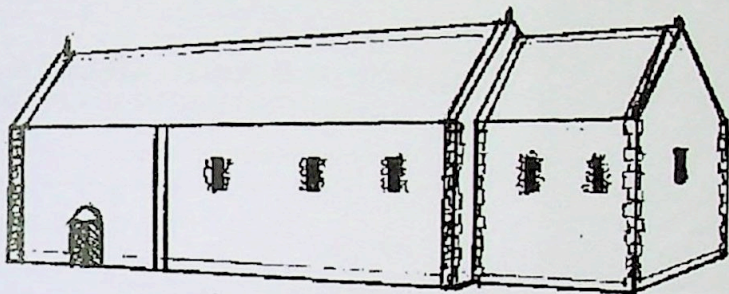


GRAFFITO. The church is rich with these medieval and later doodlings and it pays to take time studying them in different lights. Hunt for the four windmills and the very rare lines of music - three and four line plainsong staves invented in 15th century complete with notation as part of a rebus. There is even what is almost certainly the signature of John de Lydgate. There are also birds and a chalice and bread. These doodlings were probably done before the advent of benches and during the social events that took place in the nave from time to time.

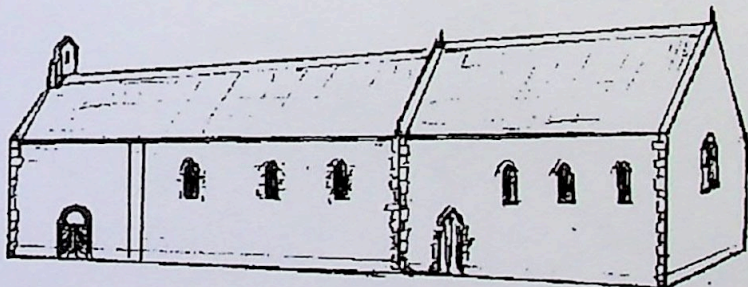
THE ORGAN stands in the south - west corner. Originally it stood in the chancel. It is a two manual and pedal instrument by Hill, Norman and Beard, with eight speaking stops, and was installed in 1924. Note also near the entrance the oil painting of the church by Mr. Derek Redhead of Wickhambrook and the aerial photograph of the church

THE 19th CENTURY BIER has carried many a resident to their rest through the village. This tends to be moved to different locations in the church.

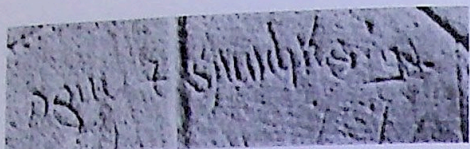
ST MARY'S CHURCH AS IT MAY HAVE DEVELOPED THROUGH THE AGES



1. The church as it may have looked in about 1100, forty years after the Norman Conquest. It probably replaced an earlier Saxon church.



2. In the early 1200s the present chancel replaced the earlier one. The new pointed Early English windows have replaced the previous windows. A small belfry has also been added.

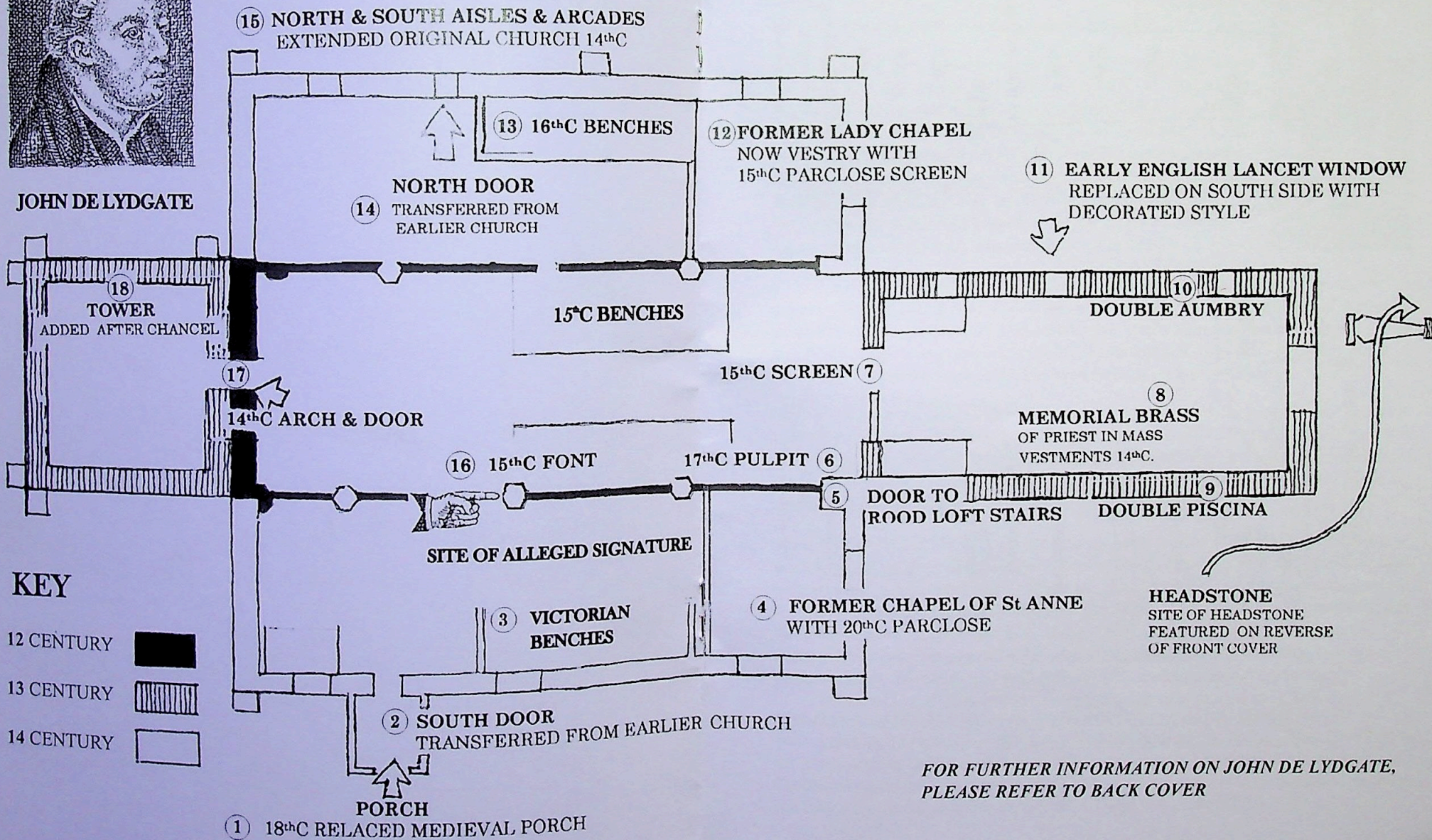


ALMOST CERTAINLY SIGNATURE OF JOHN DE LYDGATE

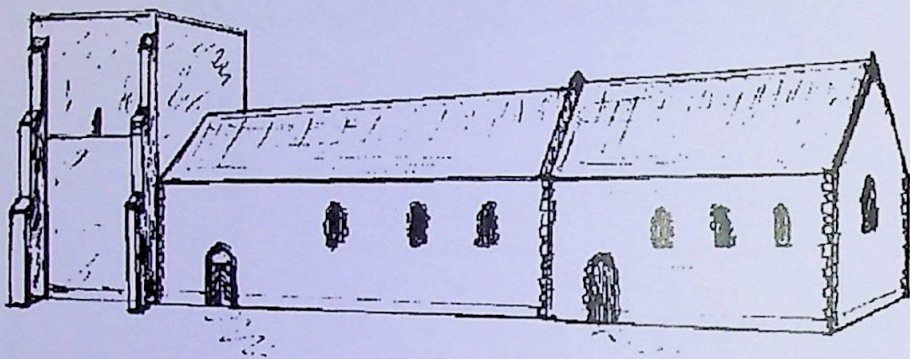


JOHN DE LYDGATE

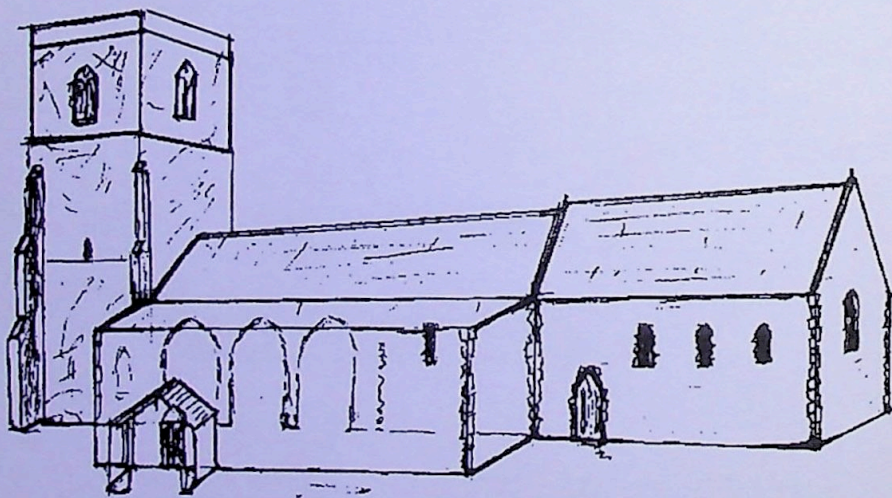
SOME OF THE MAIN FEATURES IN ST. MARY'S CHURCH, LIDGATE



FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ON JOHN DE LYDGATE,
PLEASE REFER TO BACK COVER



3. Later in 13th century the tower began to grow, probably using flints from the now abandoned castle.



4. In 1320s the north and south aisles were added and arcades built in the old walls of the Norman church. The original doorway to the old church was moved to its present position and given a pointed arch. New Decorated style windows will be added. The tower was completed and a porch added. A clerestory was never added either because there was no money or the onslaught of the Black Death in 1350 put a stop to building work.

THE ROOF which is quite handsome was renewed in about 1895 with tie beams and collar beams with traceried woodwork between them.

THE CANDELABRA suspended from the roof is a magnificent wrought - iron and brass construction and accommodates twenty four candles. Its origin is unknown.

THE BENCHES in the nave are 15th century with plain straight - topped ends. One on the north side of the centre aisle has a beautiful traceried end. Those in the north aisle with linenfold panelling are 16th century. Those at the west end of the nave and in the south aisle were made in 1895 to match the medieval ones.

THE PULPIT was probably made in 1630 during King James I's reign and has carved characteristic motifs of this period. It was probably a two decker or even three decker pulpit and originally stood for a time in the centre of the main aisle. It also had a soundboard. Probably during the Victorian period it was cut down to its present dimensions as 17th century woodwork has been reused in its square base and re-sited. West of the pulpit is a ledger slab remembering Elizabeth Godfrey (sister of Rebecca - commemorated in the south chapel) who died in 1630.



THE VESTRY was originally the Lady Chapel for weekday mass. The piscina has probably been plastered over. It contains 17th century panelling made into a cupboard. It is surrounded by a beautiful 15th century parclose screen with traceried openings. Its embattled parapets are embellished with quatrefoils and tiny two - light openings. A second gate has at some later time has been inserted on the west side.

MEMORIAL PLAQUES. Near the vestry is a dedication to Captain Thomas Catchpole (a son of the farmer of nearby Hall Farm) who was killed in Egypt in 1917. Below is a plaque commemorating local men killed in the Great War. This was originally from the Congregational Chapel that once stood in the village. Below it is a book containing details of the same Lidgate men killed in that war.

THE ROOD SCREEN beneath the chancel arch is 15th century. This fine piece of workmanship has three cinquefoil - headed openings each side of a wide entrance arch with a trefoil, ogee chapel sub - cusped top. This probably originally stretched across the whole of the chancel with painted images of the saints in the lower panels. This is fortunate to have survived the 16th century and has been greatly restored in the 19th century when new gates were added. At one point during this period it was actually painted white!

THE ROOD LOFT STAIRCASE can be seen on the south side of the chancel arch. This gave access to the rood loft which was rather like a minstrels' gallery. This surmounted the screen and carried the Rood - the great crucifix flanked by statues of Mary and John. Candles along the loft were burnt continuously expressing devotion to the central teaching of Christ's redeeming sacrifice on the cross. These were some of the

first things to be destroyed during the latter years of King Henry VIII's reign to be replaced by the Royal Arms. At the beginning of the 20th century, for a brief period, a cross and flanking candelabra were erected in this position. The chancel arch may once have contained a painting of the Doom - Christ in Judgement of the living and the dead. This and other wall paintings were whitewashed in 16th century but no trace of any surviving painting have been rediscovered after a recent survey

A PLAQUE nearby (by W. A. Forsyth of London) records the gift of a new altar, screen and side chapel restoration in 1934, in memory of Mary Spencer Gray, by the Reverend Ernest Awdry Gray who was Vicar here from 1889 - 1930.

THE CHANCEL is long and spacious. It was restored in 1853 and 1863 of which period are its open timber roof and choir stalls. The panelled communion rails date from 1934 as does the high altar which is adorned with riddel - posts surmounted by angels, in the Old English or Sarum tradition. The kneeler for the communicants is colourful work of recent times, whilst the chair in the sanctuary is 17th century. In the sanctuary wall to the south of the altar is a trefoil - headed piscina niche, with circular shafts each side dating from the 13th century when the chancel was first built. Into the piscina drain was poured the water from the washing of the priests hands and the communion rails at the Eucharist. There is a second tiny ogee - headed piscina next to it which became the fashion at one period. In the north wall of the sanctuary is a double aumbry, (or cupboards), with modern doors. This was used for storing the communion vessels or the Holy Oils used in administering the Sacraments. The Sacrament would have been reserved in a hanging pyx over the altar. The original steps were levelled during the Reformation and the stone altar removed. New flooring was built during the 19th century.



THE LEDGER SLAB in the chancel is dedicated to John Isaacson (1828), Rector here for 23 years, and Ann his wife (1819). He had succeeded his father another John Isaacson who was rector here from 1767 and who tragically lost five children in infancy.

STAINED GLASS in the chancel lancet window showing the Crucifixion, with Our Lord's burial below and the Resurrection above, is an early and interesting example of the renowned Clayton & Bell's work. It commemorates Nathaniel Cave (a relative of the incumbent Rector R H Cave) who died in 1861. The chancel east window shows the Risen Christ with His Mother and St. John. It was placed here in 1853 and it is believed to be the work of William Miller of London.

MEMORIAL BRASS of a priest in Eucharistic vestments lies beneath the carpet runner before the altar rails. This is one of only four in Suffolk and was originally part of a much larger memorial set in purbec marble. At one stage it was traditionally thought to be that of John de Lydgate, the poet, who was born here in 1370. However the style of the brass is of an earlier period and the dedication may be to the first recorded Rector, Robert Maunsel who was here in 1302. The head was lost and replaced in 1910.

THE SOUTH CHAPEL. The present Lady Chapel has now been identified from a medieval will as being a chapel dedicated to St. Anne, traditionally the mother of the Virgin Mary, and used for weekday mass in the middle ages. A cinquefoil - headed piscina niche in the south wall may still be seen. As a plaque on the wall nearby records, the parclose screen was given in 1934 when the south chapel was restored. This screen is a worthy piece of 20th century craftsmanship. Note the castle and hound in the spandrels of its entrance arch - recalling the presence of the castle - also its rich cornice at the top which is embellished with vines. Note also the framed diocesan Mothers Union banner embroidered with St. Christopher, also the fine altar cross and candlesticks of bronzed copper and silver. A wall painting of St. Christopher would have originally graced the wall over the north door to welcome travellers.



THE LEDGER SLABS are dedicated to Francis Ward (1720), his wife Rebecca (daughter of Richard Godfrey of Brinkley) (1716), also their infant son and daughter, Charles and Jane.

THE EAST WINDOW of this chapel shows the Risen Christ with the women and two apostles at the tomb. It is a memorial to Edith Kerry (daughter of the village doctor) who died in 1878. It is thought that the glass may well be by the renowned firm of Clayton & Bell.

MEMORIAL PLAQUE in the south aisle is to Francis Norman Bocock J. P., (1863 - 1932 first chairman of Lidgate Parish Council and Rector's Warden for 24 years), Mary his second wife (d 1953) and their eldest daughter, Mary (d 1956).

THE RECTORS OF LIDGATE

- 1302 WALTER MAUNSEL
 1324 WALTER WANCY
 1328 ROBERT DE WANCY *Presented by Lord John de Hastyns*
 1350 WALTER AMYAS *Presented by Isabella de Hastyns - widow*
 1377 ROBERT VAUNCY *Presented by Isabella de Hastyns*
 1380 THOMAS ATTE WELLE
 1422 ROBERT WELLES
 1441 RICHARD LANGHAM - Chaplain
 1446 JOHN TUTTEBURY
 RAD. VASKE .
 1458 THOMAS TAYLOR *Presented by Sir Edward(?)Nevill.Lord Abergavenny*
 1461 ? NEWPORT
 1474 RICHARD JOHNSON
 1496 GEORGE NEWTON
 1505 EDMUND DIKMAN
 1527 RICHARD TOPPYNG *Presented by Sir George Nevill, Lord Abergavenny*
 1558 THOMAS SIMPSON
 1576 OLIVER SARSON
 1625 GABRIEL CATCHPOLE *Presented by Sir John Cotton*
 1649 MR WARD (Puritan)
 1660 GABRIEL CATCHPOLE *Presented by Clement Heigham , gentleman. Ejected during*
 1665 CHRISTOPER CUTTING *Puritan ascendancy - reinstated at Restoration of Charles II*
 1701 SAMUEL FAIRCLOUGH
 1740 GILBERT AFFLECK *Presented by Anne Carleton*
 ?? JAMES MOORE *Presented by Nathaniel Fairclough*
 1766 JAMES FISH PALMER
 1767 JOHN ISAACSON (Senior)
 1803 JOHN ISAACSON M.A.(Cantab)
 1829 H.W.SALMON
 1841 W. J. TRAVIS
 1844 JAMES JACKSON
 1851 RICHARD WOOD
 1854 JOHN GORDON
 1858 ROBERT HAYNES CAVE M.A. Oxon
 1871 ROBERT KETTLE M.A. Cantab
 1889 E. AWDRY GRAY
 1927 LEONARD L. BUTCHER
 1954 A. J. TALBOT-EASTER, M.A.
 1956 LAURENCE B.C.NEWELL, M.A.
 1966 EDWARD P. WHALLEY, M.A.
 1973 DEREK HILL, A.P.C. Priest in Charge
 1975 ARNOLD FREEMAN, M.A.
 1980 DONAL BROWNE, M.C., M.A.
 1981 GEOFFREY G.WHITEFIELD, M.A.
 1990 ERIC CROUCHMAN
 1997 Parish vacant
 1999 IAN FINN, A.K.C.
 2007 Inter regnum
 2008 STEPHEN J. ABBOTT LL.B., B.Th.
 2013 BRIN SINGLETON
- 1828 Edward Lindsall (Curate)
 1836 John Bullen (Curate)
 1839 J. Halstead (Curate)
 1840 Charles Dowding (Curate)
 1842 New Rectory Built
- 1923 Lidgate joined with Ousden Parish
 Rectory transferred to Ousden
- Rectory returns to Lidgate
 1999 Rectory transferred to Wickhambrook
 2002 Bansfield Benefice set up comprising
 Lidgate, Ousden, Wickhambrook, Stradishall,
 Denston, Stansfield, Cowlinge

SOME ADDITIONAL PHOTOGRAPHS



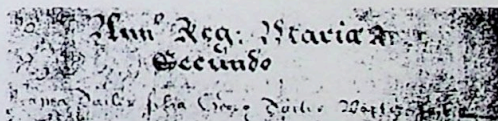
A model of the chancel arch as it may have appeared in 15C. Note rood, loft, screen and paintings all highly coloured.



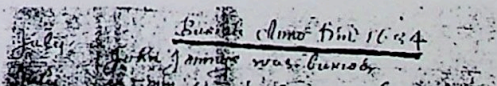
The chancel arch as it is today. Note remains of screen and door to rood loft in top right corner.



This may be part of a baluster from a Saxon belfry predating the present church (held by Suffolk Archaeological Society) B.St.E



From baptismal register of 1554, the second year of Mary Tudor's reign. Difficult to read but it says: 'Joanna Tailor, daughter of George Tailor, was baptised.'



From the burial register of 1684, the last year of Charles II's reign reads: 'July: John Jennings was buried.'

KEY DATES IN THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE CHURCH

1100s. A small church may have stood on this spot prior to the Conquest. Some authorities state that the south doorway (which has a lintel and tympanum) was originally Norman and was later adapted and given its pointed arch when it was taken from the Norman nave and placed in the new south aisle in the early 14th century

1200s (early) The present chancel was built in the Early English style.

1290 - 1310 (about). The western tower was built with early Decorated window style

1320 -1330 (about). The north and south aisles were added to the earlier Norman nave and the chancel received two larger south windows. By this time the Decorated style had developed to produced fine windows with beautiful tracery.

1400s The south aisle received a new east window in the Perpendicular style. The interior was equipped with a new font and sets of benches, also a fine new rood screen across the chancel arch and a parclose screen to the north and south chapels (that on the south was destroyed). The screen was painted white in 19th century.

1500s A further set of benches, with linenfold ends, were placed in the north aisle.

1530 - 1600 Much changed during the reigns of Henry VIII & Edward VI. Wall paintings whitewashed (a little colouring remains in some places) and stained glass windows destroyed (tiny fragments remain in some windows). The rood and rood loft were destroyed (the rood stairs remain through the door behind the pulpit) and the rood screen modified. A restoration during Queen Mary's reign was reversed during Elizabeth's. The flag stone inside the porch may be the original altar table.

1600s (early) A new pulpit was made (probably originally a two or three decker) during this period, when greater emphasis was placed upon the preaching of the Word. This originally stood with a soundboard in the centre aisle before the rood screen. The two bells at present in the tower were made in 1624/5

1640s There is no evidence of Cromwell's man, William Dowsing, causing destruction in the church. The nearest he came was Kirtling and Ashley. By then Lidgate was firmly in the Puritan camp and any High Church revival in Charles II's reign had been destroyed.

1700s. The simple south porch was added to replace the previous medieval one.

1853/1905. The church underwent major restoration in several stages. The chancel was restored in 1853 (when the new east window received its stained glass) and again in 1863. In 1871 the Rector had the rood screen restored and given a new set of gates. Between 1895-1905 the nave, aisles and tower were restored in stages, the contractor being S Rolfe of Cheveley. A Thanksgiving service for the completion of the work took place on All Saints Sunday 1905

1949 The lead roof of the nave was replaced by a tiled roof to match the chancel.

1951 The vestry floor was repaved with bricks.

1977 New hassocks were embroidered for the Silver Jubilee

2009 Part of the nave was repaved with bricks

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The first Guide to St. Mary's Church was produced in 1989 and thanks and congratulations are given to Roy Tricker for his devotion, scholarship and enthusiasm in producing the booklet. Thanks are also expressed to Betty Whitefield and Becky Carlborg for the illustrations and to Brikin Baward for information about glass.

Since then it has been felt necessary to expand and update Roy Tricker's original guide. This has been done by Anthony Foreman who has also provided the photographs and line drawings for the possible development of the church.

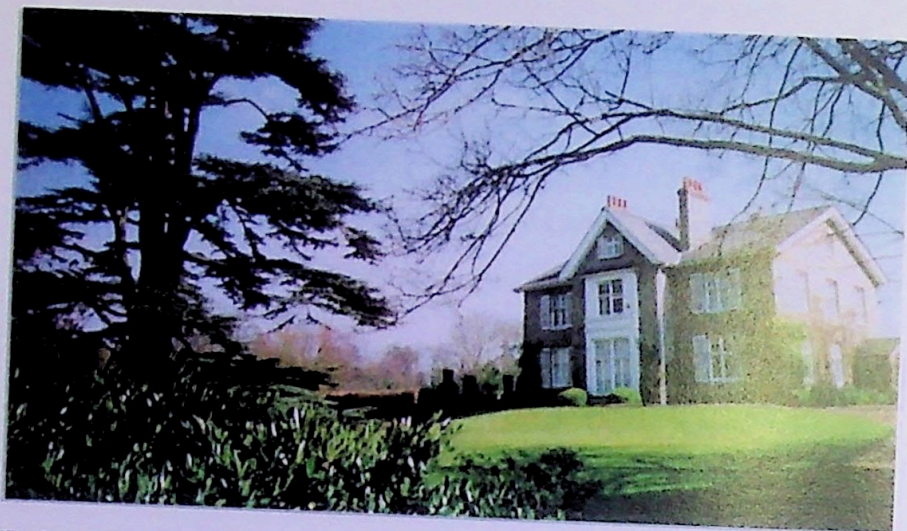
Reprinted in April 2019 with minor edits, this September 2014 amended version was completed with the addition of three new illustrations by Sean Hogan and an article on "John de Lydgate", by the Rev. Anthony Foreman.

Please note, some historical details are open to interpretation and the editor would welcome any additional information that may be forthcoming.

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THE RECTORIES



Early clergy probably lived near the church. By at least the 17th century there was a parsonage on the site of the present Old Rectory which lies at the other end of the village. The present Rectory was built in 1841 but ceased to house the incumbent when Lidgate was amalgamated with the Ousden parish in 1923 and the Rector moved to that village. It was the home of the Dewing family for twenty years and during World War Two it became a centre for troop operations. A new Rectory was built in Lidgate where the Rector lived until transferring to Wickhambrook in 1999.



MEMORIAL PLAQUE TO LOCAL MEN KILLED IN THE GREAT WAR

This plaque on the north wall by the vestry original hung in the Congregational Chapel in the village, now demolished.

By chance it turned up in a blackened condition at a car boot sale - when cleaning revealed its identity its new owner restored it to the church.

JOHN DE LYDGATE

Lidgate's most famous son was born around the year 1370. He has always been associated with Suffolk House in the main street, though most of this dwelling is of a later era.

We know nothing of his parents but he was sent to school in the Great Abbey of Bury St. Edmunds run by the Benedictine monks. In his personal testament which he composed near the end of his long life he admits that he didn't like going to church very much and was something of a tearaway. He scrumpled apples, made faces at people and was late for meals. He was 'like a young colt running wild without a bridle'. He confesses, too, that he wasn't an ideal monk. Although he wore the habit of a monk his thoughts were often elsewhere and he often disobeyed the Rule of St Benedict.

After his schooling he studied at Oxford University and in 1423 he was elected prior of the Benedictine monastery at Hatfield Broad Oak in Hertfordshire. How he came to move in court circles we do not know. But he frequently attended and travelled to France with the court. He became acquainted with Thomas Chaucer the son of the famous poet, Geoffrey. It is as a poet that John is best remembered. He had a prodigious output penning some 140,000 lines to paper. He became one of the most popular and important poets of his day writing on both secular and religious subjects. He presented his Life of St Edmund to King Henry VI on the latter's visit to the abbey and this beautifully illuminated manuscript is still preserved in the British Library.

To John we owe the expression 'needs must' and the use of the word 'talent'. Due to the hostility to monks at the Reformation his poetry fell out of favour and was largely discredited. Now he is once again being perceived as an important contributor to the great canon of British poetry.

In 2014 a graffito was discovered in Lidgate Church which is almost certainly his autograph. This is very difficult to prove but it is nice to think that the famous John paid a visit to his old church and wiled away an October afternoon engraving his signature. This can be found (with difficulty) on the first right hand pier of the arcade as you enter the church.

John retired to the abbey, taught in the school, and died in about 1450. He is probably buried under the modern tennis court.



SEAN HOGAN JULY 2013

NOTES

DONATIONS
MUCH APPRECIATED

