

**A History of
St Andrew's Church
Boyton**



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Assistance received from.
Fred Stentiford
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Dr Aleksandra McCain, University of York,
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The Trustees of Lambeth Palace Library ICBS06876 Covers the 1870 Plan
British Library Board P674/1 Covers the 1830 plan and the sketch

St. Andrew's Church

Boyton

St. Andrew's Church has served the people of Boyton for nearly one thousand years. Church records exist of births, baptisms, marriages and deaths going back to the 16th century. There must have been countless generations of people from Boyton who have celebrated their religion through this Church.

The Church building is Grade 2 listed and therefore the exterior of the Church must be preserved in its present state. It is believed that the original building on this site was built by the Normans or, less likely, by the Saxons (between 800 and 1154 AD). It was significantly altered in the 14th century by the addition of a tower, then more work on the entrance and the addition of three bells during the 15/16th century. In the Victorian era the nave, chancel and porch were rebuilt, including the foundations, and the vestry was added. *(The ground floor plans of these periods are shown in appendix 1.)*

A unique feature of St. Andrew's Church is the staircase to the tower built in early/mid 14th century, which makes it about 700 years old. It is made from Septaria, a local stone found only in the east of Suffolk. It may be the only staircase of its

kind in England.

The Church as seen today is an amalgam of many different periods of village prosperity and is reflected in the Church fabric.

The village is once again being asked to restore the Church so that it may continue its work for the village.

Location of the Church

Boyton from Saxon to the Elizabethan period would have been surrounded by the sea on three sides. The River Tang would have been tidal up to the road bridge, which is on the Hollesley to Butley road of today. Where in times past this would have been a ford. Today a footpath runs near the Church, across a meadow and down to the river. Where the footpath goes into the meadow could mark the point where labourers unloaded stone for the Church.

Some of the churches near the coast of East Anglia were built with docking facilities in mind, so that unloading of heavy stone did not mean a long trudge to deliver the cargo. However, this concept for the area is challenged by Valerie Fenwick who believes that the tide did not get as far as this in the period of

interest as the mean sea level was lower than today!

Before 1066

Before the arrival of the Normans there was a village where Boyton is today, referred to as Boituna or Bohtuna in the Domesday Book. This book states that:

“The village had a Church and together with eight acres was valued at 12 pence in the time of Edward the Confessor (1042 to 1066)”.

Thus there was a Church in the village before 1066 but there are no details as to its construction or location. It is impossible to state with any degree of authority that the present layout bears any relationship to this original building. However, the simple structure of the Church in 1818,



before any of the Victorian alterations, is similar to some of the Saxon churches based on the Romanesque model of a nave

and chancel but no aisles, as can be seen at Escomb in Durham.

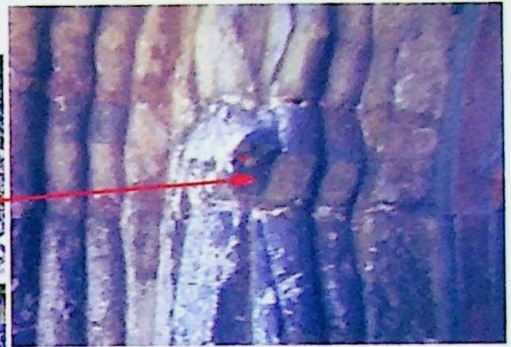
Norman period (1066 to 1154)

With the arrival of the Normans a church was either built or updated on the present site. The earliest identifiable fabric is of 12th century date - a nook-shaft and a Romanesque door frame. The nook-shaft has been reset into the exterior northwest corner where the nave west wall and the tower meet. The reconstructed Romanesque doorway, in the



The Norman nook-shaft found in the northwest corner of the Church.

north vestry east wall, is a fine example of the period. The door frame was moved by the Victorians from the nave north wall. D E Davy records that the door was in the north wall in 1830). There are three orders of



**The Norman door frame -
Ball decoration and chevrons**

arches with chevron decoration on the outer order, and the inner order has ball decorations. These ball decorations are sometimes referred to as bead or pellet decoration.

There is no clear evidence as to where the door was originally. However north wall doors in the Norman period are not unusual

Late Medieval (14th century)

The tower of St Andrew's seems to have been added at this time, as occurred with many other churches in Suffolk. The evidence for this is the doorway to the staircase, which is constructed in Pointed Gothic style.

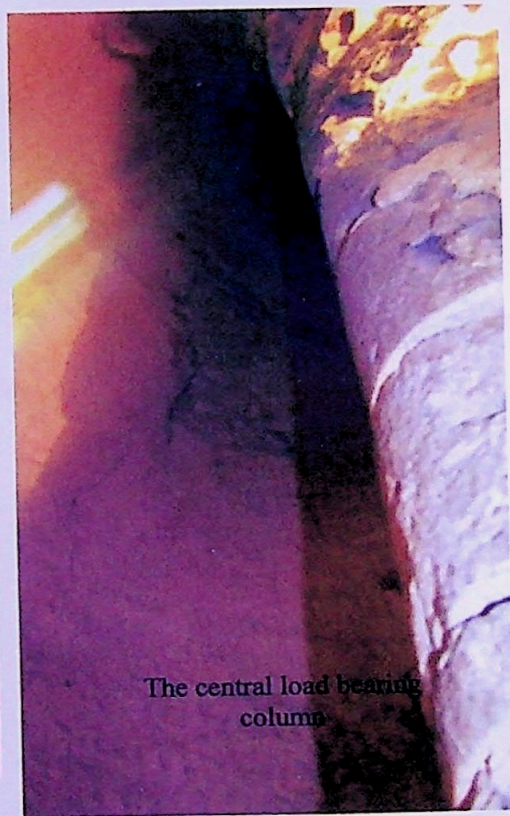


The tower contains probably the most interesting turret staircase in England because of the stone used in its construction.

The core of the construction uses a local crag stone, whereas the steps have been formed in Septaria. This stone is described by Alec Clifton Taylor as a stone which "scrapes

the barrel” of building stones. However, this stone has been used from Roman times for rough walling, and also by the builders of Framlingham and Orford castles.

exceptional and probably unique, but their efforts were probably doomed from the outset. They are not only prone to cracking caused by shrinkage as they dry, but also they are unreliable under



Septaria is usually found as nodules, although this may be because the stone weathers very badly. As the stones dry they form internal cracks or “septums”, which give it its name. The stairs here have been formed from very large lumps of septaria, the largest known in any building in the UK, and the only ones carved on three sides. The feat of incorporating them in a spiral staircase is

compression forces.

The tower has an outer face of mainly natural flints, mostly unknapped, whereas the nave is knapped flint.

**Late Medieval Period
(15th and 16th century)**

A porch was added to the Medieval structure, but there are no dates ascribed to its construction other than it is medieval. The evidence for this period is on the nave south

In addition, three bells were added to the tower in the 15th century. There is only one bell now and it is not known when the other bells were taken down. The remaining bell is inscribed "John Darbie made me 1692."



15th century motifs of fleurons leopard's heads and shields on

inner door frame, where the hollow-chamfered inner order is elaborately carved with small square bosses showing shields, leopard's heads and fleurons. In 1830 Davy records a porch but no dates are given as to when this porch was built.

It can be assumed that the Norman door was moved from the south entrance to the north wall during this period, but there is no evidence to support this assumption.

18th/19th Century

In 1781 it is reported that "part of the dilapidated chancel collapsed." The chancel was rebuilt in 1782.

Isaac Johnson drew a sketch of the church prior to 1818 and shows three windows on the south wall and the nave and chancel to be one continuous building. D E Davy, on his visits to the Church in 1830, copied a manuscript referring to

the chancel and he also appears to have taken a copy of the plan of the Church which shows two windows only.

It is my supposition that Johnson's sketch shows the Church prior to the collapse, whereas Davy's plan is after the rebuild.

Some doubt is therefore cast on the date of the collapse as Davy refers to the collapse occurring in 1817

Victorian (1841 to 1918)

The prosperity of the Parish of Boyton during the Victorian period was marked by the growing sale of good quality clay for Delftware china, and coprolite (fossilized dung) for fertiliser. Both of these caused a growth in the size of the population, which peaked during the 1860s at 360 people.

This prosperity was probably the stimulus for an expansion of the Church with the rebuilding of the chancel and nave and the addition of a vestry in 1869. Though the current day vestry would have been, in 1870, a north transept The architect for this was William Smith, a pupil of R C Carpenter.

The roof, the Church walls including foundations, but not the tower, were completely rebuilt in the 1869 restoration.
(During further restoration work in 2006 various wooden



pins from the Victorian roof were found).

The Victorian font consists of an octagonal top with a panelled bowl centred on a central chamfered shaft, and four circular columns.

The magnificent east window, showing Christ with the





Apostles, was installed in memory of William Aldrich, who was rector in Boyton for 29 years from 1840.

The Church Minutes of 1897 record that the bell hung from an apple tree and it fell in the summer of 1896 and it was rehung with a new axle in 1897 at a cost of £3 1s 6d

Modern Times

Over the last 20 to 30 years the village has seen a dramatic change in the population. This was caused by a large influx of people wanting to live in the country. This new generation, along with the original inhabitants, are keen to preserve the heritage of the village. The Church tower is the oldest building in the village and the Church is a fine example of

Victorian development.

The Church houses a plaque giving the names of those from the village who died during WW1 and WW2.

Anomalies

There is one feature which, as yet, we cannot account for, and that is a banding in the flints. This feature is distinctly marked by the change from brown flints to dark blue. Both areas are knapped but the grouting in the brown area is distinctly of a poorer mortar .

Some areas, especially on the east wall, have vertical banding as well.

A reasonable argument to explain this feature would be welcome.



Appendix 1

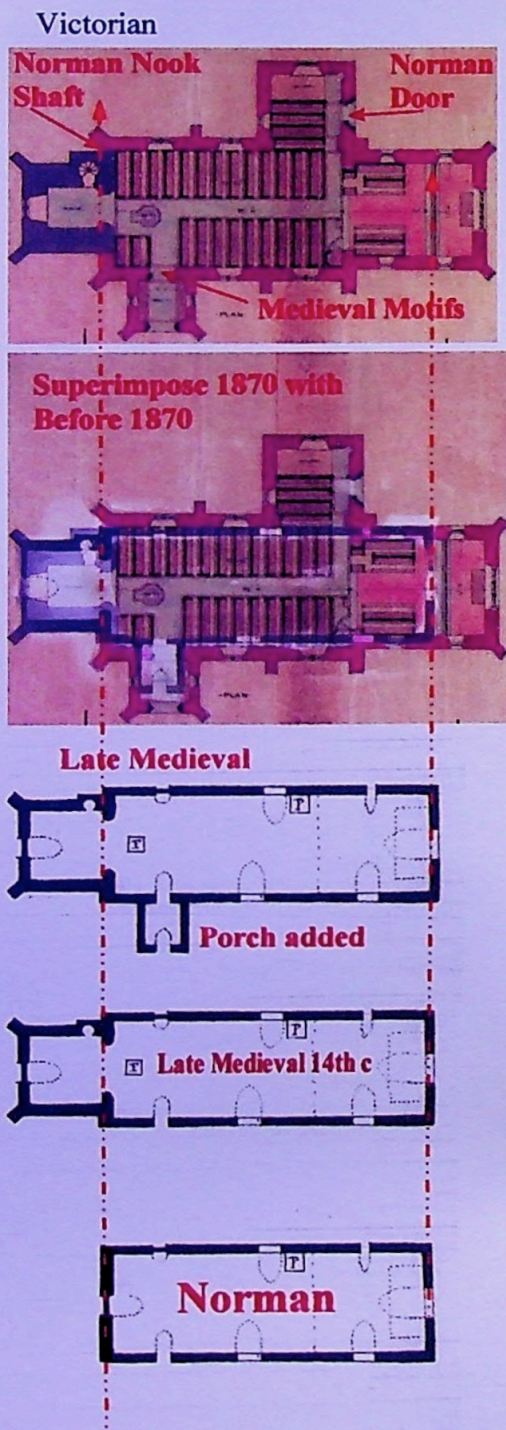
The Phases of Construction of St Andrew's Boyton

From the present day layout of St Andrew's Church it is not possible to determine the phases of construction from Norman or Saxon to Victoria. The major assumption is that the current Church was built with little regard for the original foundations except for the tower.

Superimposing the plan from Davy, 1830, onto the plan of the new Church (by the architect W Smith) produces a concept where none of the present walls is older than Victorian. To test this supposition an archaeological dig is needed.

The only information on the original Church are from details recorded by D E Davy in 1830; thus it is now possible to visualize the layout of the older Church (the late medieval layout is a copy of the plan recorded by D E Davy in 1830).

A comparison can be made with other known Saxon and Norman churches which are similar to the basic shape of St Andrew's. The main features are a rectangular building with the main entrance in the south wall near to the south east corner, and the general layout



being narrow and long.

Thus the basic layout of the original Church may have been Saxon and only modified by the Normans, but the more likely explanation is that the original Church is Norman.

During the 14th century the tower was added in such a way that the tower centre line was made the same as the nave centre line, thus keeping the visual effect balanced. The two corner buttresses, of the tower, were repaired during the Victorian era, as was the closing of the west doorway. This work entailed the use of standard size red bricks. Any earlier than Victorian and the brick of choice would have been narrow bricks.

Sometime during the Late Medieval period (15th century), or possibly later, the porch was added along with the motifs on the inner arch.

The Diocesan Terrier reports of 1843, 1870 and 1879 state that:

- During the early Victorian period a gallery was built but it only survived until the major Victorian rebuild was

undertaken in 1867/9. The Church reopened in April 1870.

- The rebuild was extensive; the Church was lengthened by 12' to its length of today of 59' 6". The width was changed to its present width of 21' 6". The nave and porch were rebuilt and a north vestry added.
- The Victorians were also responsible for *'taking out Norman doorway cleaned and placed in the new north transept'*.
- The new location of the Norman door to the north vestry and repositioning the nook - shaft is Victorian.

In 2006 the village started a new restoration phase of the fabric. So far the roof beams have been cleaned and the roof material has been replaced. The next step is to restore the tower and Septarian stairs.

Appendix 2

How to find Boyton

The village is situated just off the coastal road from Hollesley to Butley on a loop road. The Church is beside the Mary Warner Alms

Houses to the west of the Village.

Grid reference TM372471

Latitude 52° 4' 17" N

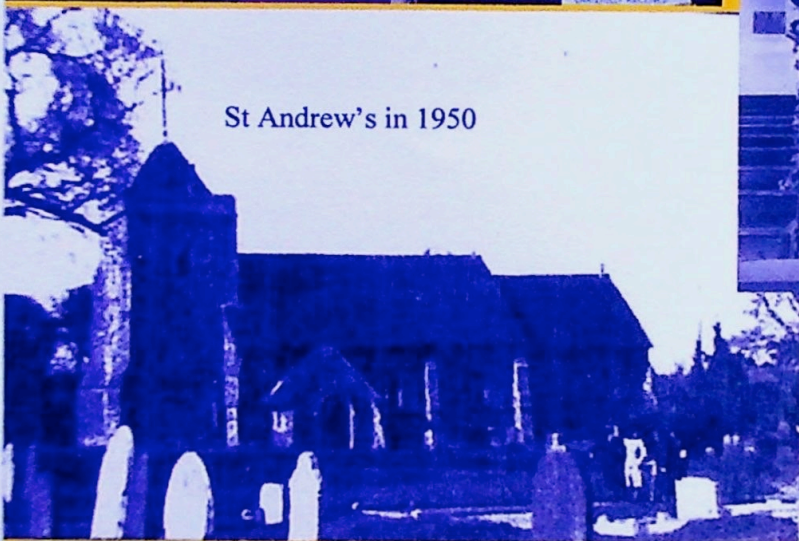
Longitude 1° 27' 34" E

Post Code IP12 3LQ

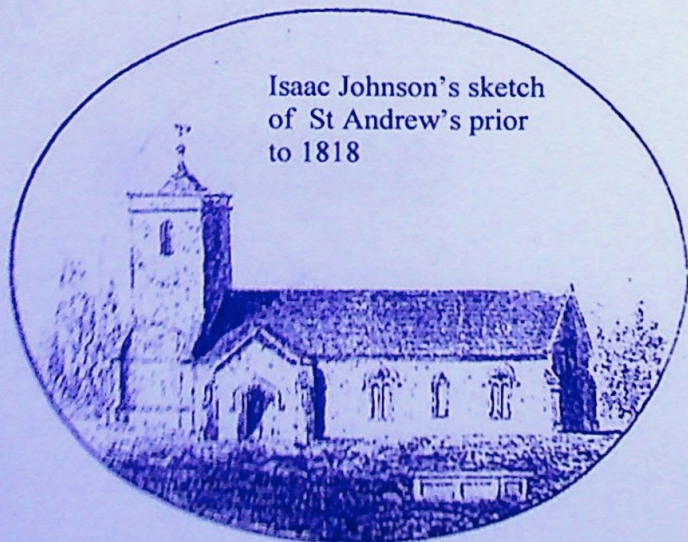
St. Andrew's
today and in
1930



St Andrew's in 1950



Isaac Johnson's sketch
of St Andrew's prior
to 1818



Boyton, 1818

**THIS UNIQUE CHURCH
SHOULD BE PRESERVED
FOR FUTURE
GENERATIONS OF
WORSHIPPERS, VISITORS
AND PARISHIONERS.**