



ST MARY'S CHURCH, THORPE MORIEUX, SUFFOLK

Some notes for visitors

Welcome to our parish church. We hope you will enjoy the peace and serenity of our church and its setting in the village. Despite its apparent peace it is an active spiritual centre for the village with regular services on Sundays as well as other activities.

The parish of Thorpe Morieux is in a benefice comprising Rattlesden, Brettenham, Thorpe Morieux and Hitcham. "Thorpe" is the Saxon word for an agricultural settlement. One of the first lords of the manor was Hugh de Morieux.

The church is sited on the west side of the valley of the infant river Brett which rises two miles to the north in the parish of Brettenham and runs into a small lake next to Thorpe Hall. A church has stood in this place for nearly 900 years. The original building, thought to have been a wooden construction, was served by the monks of Bury Abbey. There is no record of the laying of a foundation stone or of consecrating the church. Nothing remains of the original structure; the present building dates from the 14th Century. The first Rector was appointed in 1229.

The Rector is the Revd. Elizabeth Law who lives at Rattlesden Rectory.

A tour of the church

South door 14th Century with carved oak quartrefoil borders. Used as the regular entrance to the church.

The Font 13th Century, square bowl, lower part of the bowl possible 12th Century, on five original circular stone shafts. The four corner columns have a little ornamentation at the top and bottom. The font cover is of carved oak and installed to commemorate the coronation of King George V, 1911.

The Nave 14th Century with open timber work apparently of the 19th Century. Note that the floor of the nave slopes from west to east. In 1868 came the removal of the west gallery and ancient floor, and an extensive re-furnishing at a cost of £2,000.

Window (on left of organ) contains a good example of Victorian stained glass carried out in the 15th Century style, in memory of Louise Marian Alice Temple aged 9 years who died 19th October 1877.

The organ installed in 1968. One manual and nine stops built in about 1860 for Earl Howe by Bishop & Stair of London (now Bishop & Son of Ipswich). It comprised instruments from St George's, Albemarle Street and the Curzon Chapel, London.

Continuing round the church in a clockwise direction

War Memorial in memory of those parishioners who gave their lives in World Wars I and II

Narrow-arched doorway (near pulpit) 14th Century. This was the entry to the rood screen and loft which before the 16th Century carried carved and painted figures of the Crucifixion with the Virgin Mary and St John. The loft and supporting screen stretched across the chancel arch and were destroyed in the Reformation.

Pulpit on the north side of the chancel arch, made of English carved oak, octagonal in form, on marble and stone plinth, supported by eight shafts of green Irish marble. Part of the re-furnishing of 1868.

Chancel and Arch 14th Century work, a pointed arch dividing chancel from nave. The chancel was much repaired and restored presumably in 1868.

Window, first on north side. Another good example of late Victorian stained glass, done in the 15th Century style. It is in memory of Rev. George Porter de Hocheford Larpent, M.A. died 5th August 1871 aged 32 years. He was curate 1862-68. The subjects of the window are appropriate – the left light has Christ the Good Shepherd with lambs, the right light Christ's commission to Peter to "Feed my sheep". Note the small head in the top roundel – of Larpent?

Vestry contains a 14th Century piscina in the south wall, all that remains of an original side chapel. The whole of the vestry was restored and mostly rebuilt when the major restoration took place.

Wall monument to the members of the Fiske family. John Fiske's daughter Sarah married John Haynes Harrison and their descendants became Rectors of Thorpe Morieux. William Thomas became Canon of St Edmundsbury Cathedral. He was also Bishop of Glasgow and Galloway, finally returning to Thorpe as Rector until his retirement in 1912. He was a much loved and respected man.

Colman memorial slab below the wall monument is over the interred remains of the Revd. Thomas Colman. (His son was involved in the "infamous" Popish Plot of 1678 and was martyred as a Roman Catholic). Thomas, came to Thorpe from Brent Eleigh where he had been Rector from 1625 to 1642, becoming rector of Thorpe Morieux for the period 1641-1661. He graduated from Trinity College, Cambridge B.A. 1621, M.A. 1624, B.D. 1631 and ordained priest 1625. He was most likely related to the Colman family of Brent Eleigh House.

The Altar kneeling benches were designed and made locally from oak inlaid with yew wood from the Helmingham Hall Estate in Suffolk, and given to the church in 1963.

Windows (second on north and its pair on the south side) clear glass with two lozenge panels containing the last remaining fragments of medieval glass in this church and culled from obscure parts of other windows in this church in 1959.

Bishop's Chair The chair was given in memory of Donald McNaughton (died 1998) who was, for many years, churchwarden here. In 1999 an embroidered cushion worked by Mrs Mary Brooks was added. A second cushion was made for the rector's stall. Both show the diocesan arms.

Altar An oak table, part of the re-furnishing of 1868.

The Reredos was given to the church in 1963. It was designed and made locally at Brandeston Forge.

Altar cross and candlesticks Late Victorian brass. The wooden cross was designed and given by Mr Jack Penton, church warden, of Potash Farm, who also designed the three-arrow staff for Bury Cathedral.

East Window 17th and 19th Century stonework containing stained glass by Burne Jones's pupil O'Connor. This is a memorial window to members of the Harrison family. The glazing had become decayed in 1959 and was repaired and redesigned to include all but the densely coloured backgrounds of the original. In the lower arcaded panels three new motifs were introduced. Centre, chi-rho emblem. Left, the arms of Morieux. Right, the arms of Harrison. Note in the three main lights there are scenes of the Nativity, the Crucifixion and Pentecost but no Resurrection scene. The true evidence of the Resurrection is in you. Note too the anchor, an earlier token of Christianity before the use of the cross (the anchor of faith).

Credence Table designed and made locally of oak and yew wood. Presented in memory of Commander the Revd. Eric Hart-Dyke.

Piscina on the south wall 13th Century with Purbeck marble shaft and stiff leaf foliage, designed specially for ablutions (washing communion vessels) during the celebration of the mass.

Sedilia 13th Century stone seat for priest, deacon and sub-deacon during celebration of the mass.

Window nearest chancel arch on south side contains late Victorian glass in memory of the Revd. R Charles Temple, Rector of this parish 1875-1899, he held a doctorate of Jena University.

Wall Tablet of early Victorian elegant neo-classic design. A memorial to Sarah Thomas and John Haynes Harrison.

Returning to the Nave

Hatchments on the east wall of the nave on painted lozenge panels. On the north side, the arms of the Harrison family, 19th Century, John Haynes Harrison quartered to include Haynes, Fiske and Gosnold families. On the south side, the arms of the Warner family. A 20th century hatchment for Sir Thomas Courtney Theydon Warner, 1st Baronet of Brettenham Park, who died 15th December 1934. This is quartered to include his wife, Lady Maude, the 6th daughter of the first Earl de Montalt.

Lectern late Victorian Brass, probably installed in 1868.

Nave Piscina South side of the nave, 14th Century but damaged. Before the Reformation this would have served as a side altar in the nave.

Window of St Peter and St Paul Commissioned by the Revd. Dr Edward Charles Brooks in 2000, it depicts St Peter with cross keys, St Paul with sword, scroll and ship and in the lower base panel St Clement of Rome. It was installed and dedicated in 2002 in memory of his life as a clerk in Holy Orders and of his wife, Mary.

War Memorial to the parishioners who served their country in the Great War (World War 1)

Stone bracket 15th Century delicately carved stone. Originally an image stool, it was found early in this century embedded in the nave piscina.

Pews and choir stalls carved oak, all part of the 1868 re-furnishing. The present day arrangement reflects present day needs and shows an uncluttered interior. In 1987 some 70 hand-embroidered kneelers were added to the nave, paid for and worked by parishioners and friends.

Window 20th Century glass.

Tower Arch early 15th Century. Note the splendid proportions and typical East Anglian elegance.

West Window a beautiful feature inserted in the 15th Century.

The Bells three bells, rehung and the tenor bell recast in 1962. Their inscriptions read:

1. P Sany and J Burton made me 1713
 2. Thomas Cheese made me 1629.
 3. Thomas Cheese made me 1632
- All are in regular use for services.

Memorial slabs at the west end of the nave. Note also the series of 19th Century memorial ledger stones to members of the Harrison family in the floor of the aisle. These are a sad reflection on the high death rate among young people at that time.

Temple window information is on the window.

Moving outside

The South Porch. Note the high pitched roof, once thatched, now clad with clay tiles. The walls of the nave and tower are 14th Century work of flint and rubble with stone dressings for corners, buttresses, windows, doors etc. The buttresses on the nave walls are of an unusual "V" shape (cp similar ones at Raydon). Remains of the stairway to the rood loft can still be seen on the north wall (next to the pulpit). The west window in the tower stands out as a beautiful example of a 15th Century improvement to the older fabric. The chancel walls and roof have undergone much alteration and repair during the 16th, 17th and 19th centuries.

The Churchyard is entered through a 19th Century timber memorial lych-gate with frontal inscription "I am the Resurrection". Several examples of finely designed and now lichen-covered gravestones remain. This churchyard in early spring with its plentiful array of aconites and snowdrops, and with lime and chestnut trees in summer foliage, is a pleasing sight indeed. The flower borders are cared for by the parishioners.

© Mrs Mary Brooks

Published by Thorpe Morieux P.C.C. 2007