

*All Saints Church
Little Bealings
Suffolk*



*Short History
and Guide*

Welcome to this ancient church. We hope that this little booklet will help to show you some of its beauty and interest. Please feel free to explore it and to enjoy its features of interest. Above all, we hope that you will feel 'at home' here in our Father's House.

Please say a prayer for the priest and people whose Spiritual Home it is and who would welcome any contributions that their Visitors can spare to help them to keep their ancient church intact and beautiful for future generations to use and to enjoy.

May God bless and keep you

The Church of All Saints, Little Bealings is a small and endearing building in an idyllic setting, which serves a small but picturesque parish about three miles from Woodbridge and five miles north-east of Ipswich. The parish is bisected by the Railway Line which runs from Ipswich to Lowestoft, also by the little River Fynn, which flows through it on its way to join the River Deben at Martlesham Creek. The southern extremity of the parish is about a quarter of a mile from the A1214 at Kesgrave, whilst in the north it stretches to within a quarter of a mile of Great Bealings Church.

The village itself is beautifully set in the pretty Fynn valley and is therefore low-lying — a tranquil and charming corner of Suffolk, with a variety of picturesque houses and cottages, also plenty of trees. The church stands a little way up the northern slope of the valley, slightly above most of the houses of the village and just above the 50 foot contour line. From the southern approach to the village, its little tower may be seen, although it is somewhat dwarfed by the trees which surround it.

Historical development of the church.

As with all medieval churches, All Saints' contains work from a variety of periods, as people from different ages and religious traditions have altered and beautified it. Some of the landmarks in its long history are as follows:

Late 1000s or 1100s. Possibly some of the masonry in the south wall of the nave dates from this time, and therefore also the core of the nave walls.

1296. Giles Dodingesles is the first recorded Rector here. About this time the chancel was built (its windows can be dated c. 1270-1300), also the west window of the nave.

1300s. The south porch tower was built, thus completing the fabric of the medieval building.

Early 1400s. The present font was made, also the cornices of the chancel roof.

Late 1400s or early 1500s. The eastern part of the south nave wall was widened slightly and faced with Tudor brick. Possibly this was built to accommodate the stairs to the rood loft, and the window placed here to give light to the rood screen.

1600s. The pulpit was made.

1750. Tom Martin visited the church and noted that part of the base of the rood screen remained in place where the nave and the chancel meet. Painted upon it were 12 Saints (probably the Apostles), which had been badly defaced. The chancel had a boarded ceiling upon which were carved the Instruments of the Passion. Instead of the usual rails, the Communion Table was 'pewed-in'; presumably it was surrounded by woodwork, like that of a box-pew.

1810. David Elisha Davy visited the church. At that time the font stood on the north side of the nave, near the blocked north doorway and the pulpit occupied a most unusual position at the west end of the nave. The church was furnished with box-pews, so it was possible for the congregation to face this way. The Commandments, etc., were placed upon the north wall of the chancel. The screen-base is not mentioned.

1823. Davy revisited the church and provided additional information about its interior at that time. It seems that the chancel was furnished with box-pews and in the centre of

it was a small iron stove, which he thought was probably for the use of the Sunday School.

1824. During the early part of this year a vault was sunk beneath the churchyard at the east end of the church. It was seven feet high, with an eastern entrance and was for members of the Nursey family of The Grove, although Davy records that only Robert Nursey was buried in it.

1846. Another visit from Davy, who noted an engraving of the Royal Arms on the south chancel wall. The west window at this time had 'modern mullions of wood'. The box-pews were of deal, about 4 and a half feet high, and the pulpit by this time had been moved from the west end to its present position.

During this year the box-pews were removed and some of their woodwork was used to make the new benches, with simple poppyhead ends, which were placed in the nave. This work was done by Mr. Henry Tillett and some of these benches may be seen on the south side of the nave.

Also in 1846 the present Rectory (to the north of the church) was built to the designs of William Patisson of St. John's Street, Woodbridge, who was the Diocesan Architect for Parsonage Houses. Several such houses in this part of the county (usually of 'white' Suffolk brick) are by him.

1851. The church's major restoration and enlargement took place. Again the architect was William Patisson. The main addition here was the north aisle. The old north wall of the nave had no window at all and only a blocked doorway, which was not re-used, although much of the flint-work was redeployed in the new aisle. It was also intended that the tower should have new belfry windows, battlements and a pyramid roof, but this was not carried out. Patisson's benches for the new aisle still remain and a section of his Communion Rails for the altar have been moved to this aisle.

The 1900s. A tremendous amount has been done during

our own century to maintain and beautify the church. Some of the works include: Restoration of pulpit (1925), new altar (1938), internal decoration, Children's Corner and font cover (1960), restoration of the tower (1975) and much additional work during the years which have followed.

What to see outside the church

The trim and the tree-shaded Churchyard is particularly picturesque and atmospheric and is set back from the road which climbs towards Great Bealings. It occupies part of the northern rise of the Fynn Valley and so it has a definite slope upwards towards the north. It offers peace and tranquillity from the world of computers, technology and the rat-race! A pleasant view across the valley may be obtained from near the west end of the church. Just east of the church tower is the handsome Chest-Tomb of William London, 'late of Bramford', who died in 1790.

The War Memorial to the east of the church is a particularly fine one, because it is a reproduction of the old Preaching Crosses which once adorned our churchyards. At its summit we see St. Michael, portrayed with his sword and his balances for weighing souls. The memorial is of Clipsham Stone and was erected in 1920 — the work of Messrs Clary & Wright of Ipswich, to the designs of W.D. Caroe, an architect of national repute.

It is worth standing back and admiring this charming church as a whole, in its setting. Here we have a prize example of 'small (and simple) is beautiful', because this little shrine is so humble and unpretentious; there is little here of the splendour and magnificence for which so many of our Suffolk churches are famous. The building is homely and rustic, yet so very attractive; it is small and squat, yet it is a study edifice, which sits in its sloping churchyard as if clamped upon the earth forever. A mellow mixture of colours and textures may be seen in its building materials, set against the differing greens of its surroundings. The medieval church consisted only of nave, chancel and tower and therefore was extremely small before the north aisle was added in 1851.

The north and east walls of the Chancel are rendered, but the south

wall reveals the flint-rubble masonry with which it is constructed, which includes a few bricks and tiles. Sturdy medieval buttresses strengthen its eastern corners. The three-light east window has (renewed) intersecting tracery of c. 1300 and, although there are no windows on the north side, the south-west window has 'Y' tracery of c.1280-1300 and the south-east window has simple trefoil heads to its two lights, with a trefoil above. This is very pleasing and very early 'Decorated' tracery and can be dated c.1270-1300, as can the very narrow priest's doorway between the windows. It is clear therefore that the chancel grew during the closing years of the 13th century. A small rectangular plaque beneath the east window commemorates Robert, the six month old son of Poussin and Catherine Nursey, who died in 1839.

Some of the flint-rubble masonry of the nave is exposed on the south side and here we can detect in its lower section some distinct layering of the stones, which could indicate 11th or 12th century work, and is certainly the oldest surviving part of the church. The eastern section of the nave wall has been built outwards, using mellow Tudor brick, probably in the late 15th century. Here we have an elegant two-light window with a brick hood-mould. It is highly likely that to the east of this window (or maybe rising from its sill) were the steps which led to the rood-loft, above the screen which separated the nave from the chancel. The west wall of the nave is buttressed and has a three-light window with intersecting tracery (c.1300).

The north aisle of 1851 has its own gabled roof and is faced with flints, probably from the old north nave wall. The base of the aisle and the corners of its buttresses have 'white' Suffolk bricks and the two single windows on the north side are framed with brick also. The east and west windows, of stone, have three lights, with intersecting tracery, to match their counterparts in the nave and chancel.

The tower is simple and unbuttressed; it is patched in places with brick and has been considerably altered since it was built in the 14th century, yet it was clearly a very pretty tower and some medieval work of quality can be seen in its masonry. The doorway has a continuously-moulded 14th century arch, containing a rustic wooden filling and a gate-like door. The tiny single ringing-chamber window above has a renewed top, although its sides are original. The belfry

windows are now single openings, mostly with renewed frames which have been rendered over. Only the western belfry window gives a hint of their original beauty. Here we see not only the original 14th century stone framework, but the remains of the tracery at the top shows that this was once an elegant two-light window, with ogee tracery of the 14th century. The stone string-course at the base of the parapet is studded with tiny carved heads, flowers and foliage, also two curious axes (seen near the south end of the east side and east of centre on the south side). One authority suggested that these might be hatchets and could possibly symbolise the surname of the person who gave or who carved this stonework. At the centre of the north and south sides are larger carved faces; those on the east and west sides are gargoyles which throw rainwater clear of the tower walls. The parapet has been much restored; it was originally embattled, but only the battlements at the four corners remain.

This is one of Suffolk's 22 porch-towers and so it is set on the south side rather than at the west end. Other similar arrangements in the locality include Playford, Culpho and Grundisburgh. Entering the porch we notice the tremendous thickness of the tower wall, making the interior surprisingly small. A plaque on the west wall commemorates Walter Rutherford Goodman (died 1976) who worked hard to get this tower restored in 1975. On the east wall is a framed extract from the will of Elizabeth Heard (proved in 1875), leaving 100 pounds, the interest from which was to keep her family grave (near the top of the churchyard) in repair, the rest to be distributed in coal to the poor of the parish, who were to be selected by the Rector and Churchwardens. Her husband farmed in the parish and had been Churchwarden here. Nearby is a record of the inscriptions on the bells which hung in the tower in 1750:

- 1) 'Sancta Maria ora pro Nobis';
- 2) 'O Marti Barbra pro me deum exora';
- 3) 'John Darbie made me 1677, John Rose'.

Today only 1 and 3 remain; the former a pre Reformation bell and the latter cast at Ipswich.

A small early 14th century doorway (set within a taller and wider arch) admits us to the church. Notice the small medieval Pilgrims'

Crosses carved into the stonework of the sides of the entrance arch.

What to see inside the church

Small and simple this bright little interior may be, but it is homely, attractive and atmospheric also and is a superb example of how the people of a small community have lavished love and care upon their ancient church, showing how our country churches are still very much wanted, cherished and used. There is nothing lofty or grandiose in this low and humble structure, which has few airs and graces, yet it is cosy and feels 'lived-in'. It is a worthy venue for Christian worship, the purpose for which it was first built and for which it has been regularly used ever since.

The atmosphere is enhanced by the plaster ceilings (one wonders what ancient woodwork those of the nave and chancel hide) and the floors of 'white' bricks and lozenge shaped pavers. The whitened walls of the nave and chancel lean outwards, betraying their great age and the south nave window shows the considerable thickness of the wall here. There is no chancel arch and the slight structural division between nave and chancel shows that the chancel is, in fact, slightly wider than the nave. It is interesting to pause for a moment to imagine how tiny this church was before the aisle was built; its total length is only 45ft.

A great feature of All Saints' is the way in which very worthy craftsmanship of our own times takes its place alongside the work of ages past. The small chancel has been wisely cleared of superfluous furnishings, making the sanctuary surprisingly spacious, and colour has been used tastefully. The lights hang from attractive wrought-iron brackets — the work of Herbert Hoult of Great Bealings.

The north aisle is divided from the nave by a very low arcade (1851) of three bays, with octagonal piers (after the 14th century style) of brick, with moulded capitals. The roofs are hidden by the plaster ceilings, but at the tops of the walls are the wooden cornices; those in the chancel are 15th century woodwork, of which the north nave cornice is a 19th century copy, whilst its plain southern counterpart is somewhat earlier 19th century work.

At the west end of the church, near the entrance (and symbolising

our entry into the Christian Family through Baptism), is the rather mutilated 15th century font, which is now but a shadow of its former glory. It is in the traditional East Anglian design, and a look at several fonts in the locality will show how it would have appeared when complete. Around the stem are four buttresses and what were once four lions, only these have been squared-off and therefore ruined. The little band of flowers, also the angels with wings outstretched, may still be seen beneath the bowl. Only two of the eight carved panels of the bowl remain and these are beautifully preserved. Maybe they were positioned against a wall or in a corner when the rest of the font was defaced, possibly by the Puritans in the 1640s. When complete the carvings showed the emblems of the Four Evangelists, alternating with angels, bearing shields. Now all that is left is one angel with shield and a splendid winged lion — the emblem of St. Mark. Pieces of stonework have also been hacked from the top of the bowl; here were once placed the iron staples by which a medieval font-cover or lid was locked in place to prevent the Baptismal water from being stolen. The present attractive font lid, given in 1960, is carved with vine trails and fleur de lys.

There are three distinct sets of benches in the nave and aisles, of three different dates. Those on the south side of the nave were constructed when the church was 're-pewed' in 1846 by Mr Henry Tillett. They have simple poppyhead ends, but their backs are constructed from the panelled woodwork of the 17th or 18th century box-pews which once filled the church. Stretching across the north side of the nave and into the north aisle are larger and later Victorian benches without poppyheads. In the north aisle are eight short benches (also two moved to the porch) which have slightly more exotic poppyheads. These were designed by William Patisson in 1851 and were inserted when the new aisle was built. The front bookrest for these is made up from part of the 1851 Communion Rails which were made for the sanctuary.

A memorable feature of the church is its handsome array of embroidered kneelers. These are a magnificent set, all with red backgrounds and, using the theme of All Saints, we see a rich variety of Christian Saints, including many English ones, represented by their emblems. All were hand-embroidered during recent years by people who love this church and a little booklet on sale in the church gives

a more detailed account of them.

The church was equipped with an organ probably when the aisle was added in 1851. This was a barrel-organ, without a keyboard. In 1868, George Green of Ipswich equipped it with a keyboard so it could be operated either way. In 1905, a new organ was built by J. Rayson of Ipswich. It is a single-manual instrument, with a short pedal-board and five speaking stops.

The small vestry, in the north-west corner of the aisle, is furnished with a specially-made vestry cupboard and table, designed by Hans Fleck, A.R.I.B.A. and made by Eric Cattermole, both of whom reside in the village.

Beside the main entrance, on framed oak boards (commemorating the church's association with St. Edmund's School from 1958-75) is a list of rectors of this parish from 1296 to the present day. The yellow and green flag of St. Edmund's School Wolf Cubs hangs on the north aisle wall.

Preserved on the aisle wall are the framed Lord's Prayer, Creed and Commandments, set within four arched panels and dating probably from the 18th century. These were originally setup behind the altar, although by 1810 they had been placed on the north wall of the chancel.

The pulpit is small and elegant and most of its woodwork dates from the 17th century, with simple carved panels near the top and more carving down the sides. It was restored and received a new base and steps in 1925. This work was done by Arthur Dickinson, in memory of Arthur Howe, a local farmer, the pulpit and lectern are adorned with colourful contemporary-style falls, which were embroidered by Mrs E.A. Billings in the 1970s.

The altar rails are 20th century and their central section was recently added in memory of Noel Whiting (Church Treasurer for 30 years) who died in 1986. The altar itself is simple but dignified work in oak, which was given in 1938, in memory of Valentine and Augusta Hervey.

The south-east chancel window has a very wide splay, characteristic of the late 13th century, and its sill has been lowered to form Sedilia

where the clergy could sit during parts of the medieval Mass. The east window contains the only stained glass in the church. It shows the Crucifixion, with the Blessed Virgin Mary and St. John at the foot of the cross, also the Agony in the Garden and the Risen Christ. This window, the work of A.L. Moore of London, is a memorial to Henry Naunton Waller, who died in 1899.

Memorials

In addition to the furnishings etc. which were given as memorials, there are memorial inscriptions in the church to people of the past who have been associated with it.

On the walls are three plaques, which commemorate:

1. **Maria and James Colvin** (died 1834 and 1847) of The Grove, also their second son John and their youngest son Edward, both of whom were in the Bengal Civil Service and both died in 1857 — John at Agra and Edward at Calcutta. (*Sanctuary, north*).
2. Brass plaque to **William Naunton Waller** (died 1899). This was given by his children; his widow gave the east window. (*Sanctuary, north*)
3. Metal plaque to **Helen Frances**, wife of **Edwin Phillips**, who died in 1925. (*Nave, north-west*)

The following ledger slabs are set in the floors of the church. These are mostly obscured by carpets. Some have fine coats of arms.

1. **Dorothy**, wife of **Michael Grigg**. (*Sanctuary*)
2. **Eric Sedgwick Hervey** (died 1963), with coat of arms. It is most unusual for a 20th century person to have a ledger slab in this fashion. (*Chancel*)
3. **Edward Alpe**, a Medical Doctor, who resided at The Grove and died in 1700. (*Chancel*)
4. **John Crosse** (died 1684) and Keeble, his second son (died 1711). (*Chancel*)
5. **Richard and Mary Phillips** (died 1682 and 1700), also

their children **Gertrude** (1692), **Nicholas** (1726) and **Mary** (1728), and **Ann** (1723) the daughter of **Nicholas**. (*Nave*)

6. **William Rye** (died 1711). (*Nave*)

Amongst the church plate is an Elizabethan Communion Cup, which is embellished with a floral band, also a Paten Cover made to fit it.

The Registers of Baptisms, Marriages and Burials date back to the year 1558.

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