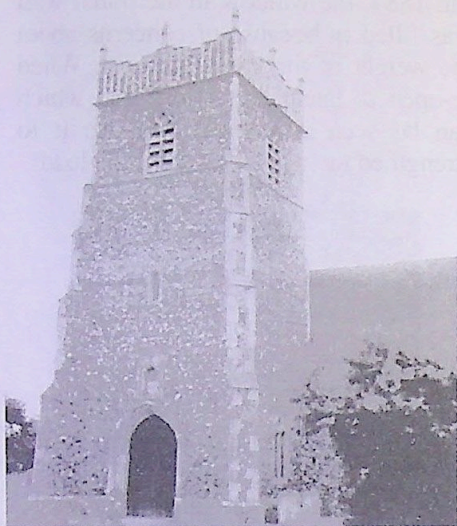
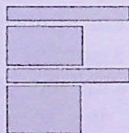


Brief Guide to Gosbeck Church



The village of Gosbeck was originally known as Estuna (Easton) in Saxon times, when the church was almost certainly on the present site of St. Mary's.

St. Mary's Gosbeck is mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086 but it is thought to be much older than that because of the Saxon elements which can be found, like the Long and Short work to be seen in the quoins or corner stones on the outside at the Eastern end of the nave.



Long and Short work

Much of the nave is, in fact, original Saxon building and it is thought that St. Mary's is the oldest church in continuous use in Suffolk.

Gosbeck is described by C. P. Canfield, on his website "www.english-church-architecture.net" as a pleasant rural parish with "sparse and dispersed settlement" and the church is set back from the lane with just one house to keep it company. This is called "Manor House" and may have been one of the three manor houses originally known to exist in Gosbeck, but it is now thought more likely that the owner of the now non-existent manor house adjacent to Gosbeck Wood would have been the patron of the church and would have contributed largely to its construction and decided where it was to be built, which would have been, for his convenience, close to his own residence so that he did not have to traverse too many muddy fields in the rain on his way to worship! This, incidentally, contradicts the thinking that these country churches were remote from their villages because the villages were abandoned after the ravages of the Black Death. In fact, evidence was found of occupation on the other side of the road from the church when Anglian Water were laying in a new main to supply the needs of the expanding North Ipswich and remains of hovels and especially their "middens" or rubbish heaps were unearthed.

The water to the left of the church gate may be part of an ancient moat. The original entrance gate to the church was at the South East corner of the churchyard and it was approached from the bottom of the dip, where the driveway to Church Farm leaves the main road. The current approach crosses land belonging to Manor House.

The de Gosebees had land in several parts of the country including Northumberland and Norfolk. There is a Gosbecks' Farm 3 miles South of Colchester, dating from when the old celtic Camulodunum (fortress of the war-god Camulos) was the capital city of England. There is the site of a Romano-Celtic temple there.

St. Mary's is one of a number of churches in the immediate area with the unusual feature of a mediaeval South-West tower which serves also as a porch, other examples of which can be found at Barham, Mickfield, Stonham Aspal, Thorndon and Witesham. (Only 26 of the 500 odd churches in Suffolk have the porch surmounted by the tower, a Suffolk idiosyncrasy). The tower is said to be by far the most imposing part of St. Mary's, Gosbeck. It rises in two stages, supported by diagonal buttresses at the South-East and South-West corners, and has a tall South doorway between. The niche over the door was recut in 1883. The arms on the left are a crown over an 'M' for Mary and on the right are the arms of the diocese of Norwich, since there was no diocese of St. Edmundsbury at the time. The niche would have contained a small statue of Mary before the Reformation.

A gap was left between the tower and the nave to allow for settlement of the weight of the stone in the tower, which would have been built in stages as the community and patron could afford it and the stepped battlements must be another subsequent addition, with their flushwork arches and finials at the corners and mid-points of the walls. The final stage of the flushwork on the

parapet is said to be 15th century but the Victorians added the finials.

In 1884, the window in the porch wall was filled in because of concerns about the weight of the stone above it. When re-opened later, the brickwork which can be seen was inserted above it to strengthen the wall and spread the load.



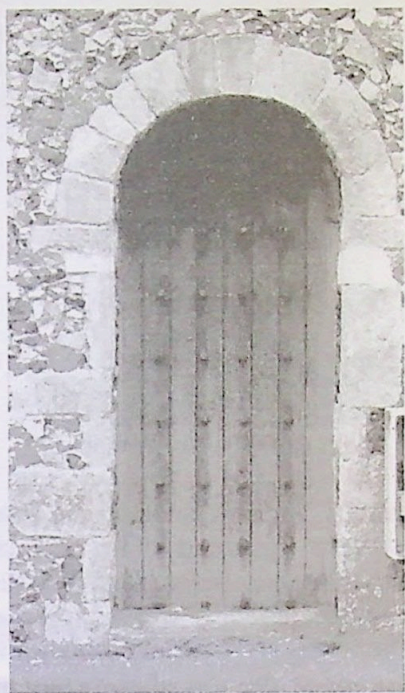
South-West view showing stair turret

The tower has a large rectangular stair turret at the north end of the W. wall, at the angle between the tower and the nave.

The round-arched, completely un-moulded (or decorated) North doorway to the nave, in dressed stone, and the tall, round-headed window high up further east, seem almost certain to be Norman and, assuming that they are contemporary with the walls in which they are set, it thus seems more likely that the nave is Anglo-Norman and *late* eleventh century, although still of a date when Saxon workmen were being used.

The walls of the church would have been painted throughout and over the North door would have been a painting

of St. Christopher, the patron Saint of Travellers.



The North Door

It was customary for the traveller, whether on foot or on horseback, to visit the church in each village he passed through, enter by the South door and pass under St. Christopher to leave by the North door.

The porch inner doorway is comparatively small and has a series of wave mouldings around it. The heavily-studded doorway to the nave is probably mediaeval.

The nave is somewhat oddly arranged, being divided by an arts and crafts style screen, dated to 1902, immediately to the right of the doorway, separating the body of the church from the font area and dedicated to the memory of a clergyman and his wife who died in 1878 and 1899 respectively. (They are

buried outside just below the East window.)

The visitor then passes through a curtained partition in the screen into the nave proper to the East.

The nave and chancel roofs are of hammer-beam construction, but those in the chancel do not appear to be old.

The wall-posts supporting them have arched braces and, in Roman Catholic times, all would have had large gilded angels on the end, rather than the thin decorative flowers they now have. All the original angels would have been torn down at the Reformation because the churchwarden at the time would have been responsible to the King for removing all angels and depictions of saints, whether carved or painted.

The two extant angels, along with the flowers on the ends of the hammer beams, are Victorian apologies and hardly represent the golden heavenly host originally intended by the positioning of these images, which did not accord with the ideas of the "new" religion and were consequently destroyed in 1547/8.

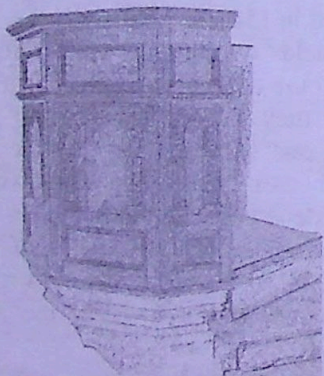
The shields on the ends of the arched braces in the chancel deserve a mention, because they depict the tools of the passion, one showing the hammer and nails, another the spear with which Jesus' side was pierced and another the crown of thorns. There is also the sponge on a reed and the seamless robe. These, again, appear to be of the Arts and Crafts period.

There is no chancel arch and the chancel is only demarcated by the raising of the floor one step, whilst the sanctuary is raised one more. Before one of the "modernisations" in Victorian

times there would have been a chancel arch probably rising from the Long and Short work of the quoins at the N.E. and S.E. corners of the nave (if these are original, they would be of Saxon origin) and this would have been where the wooden planking can now be seen, on the outside of which the shingles, or hanging-tiles, are attached above the chancel roof. These were of slate before the re-roofing of the chancel in 2008. (The chancel arch probably took up some of the space the Victorian architect had planned for something else, like the plinth of the rebuilt pulpit, and so it had to go!)

It is known, from records, that there was the royal coat of arms of Charles II on the chancel arch.

David Elisha Davy, in 1829, described the pulpit as having round, blank arches. Canford submits that "the odd five-sided pulpit has almost certainly been made from sections of a former, more conventional, Jacobean original", i.e. 17th century, Charles II.



The restored Jacobean pulpit

The altar is reputed to be of the Stuart period, like the pulpit.



The door to the tower

The heavily studded door to the tower would have guarded the church's valuables because, before the invention of safes, the church tower would have been the repository. There is another, similar door at the top of the staircase, which may have been a second line of defence in case the tower was used as a refuge in times of invasion or attack.

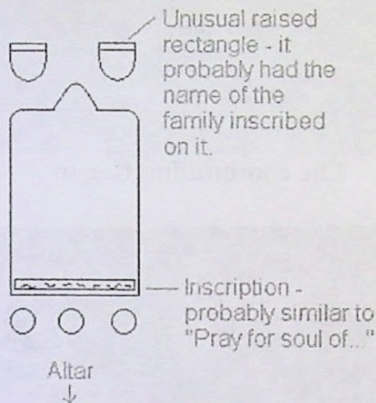
Davy also records the two boards bearing the ten commandments, beneath which are now two modern patchworks illustrating Easter and Harvest.

There were, originally, two other boards bearing the Lord's Prayer and the Apostle's Creed but these seem to have disappeared in the late 1800s, probably victims of woodworm, dry rot or death watch beetle!

Under the chancel carpet is a monument to the Dove family. The carpet is stuck down but the shape can be seen.

Under the nave carpet there was a brass with two shields and below it, according to Clive Paine, 4 sons, three daughters and a single, which could have been the

wife of the deceased. It would have been removed at the Reformation when we were no longer allowed to pray for the departed and monuments requesting us to pray for the souls of so and so were removed by Dowsing's deputies.



(In the nearby church of St Mary's in Coddendam there is a memorial to the 17th century Minister Matthias Candler. His firebrand Puritanism would have important consequences for Suffolk "churchcrawlers". One of his parishioners was William Dowsing, who had a house in this village, although actually just over the border in Baxtham parish. Dowsing learned to be a thorough-going protestant at the feet of Candler's pulpit; in 1644, Dowsing would make a journey through Suffolk and Cambridgeshire on behalf of the Earl of Manchester, wrecking sacramental imagery in more than 250 churches.)

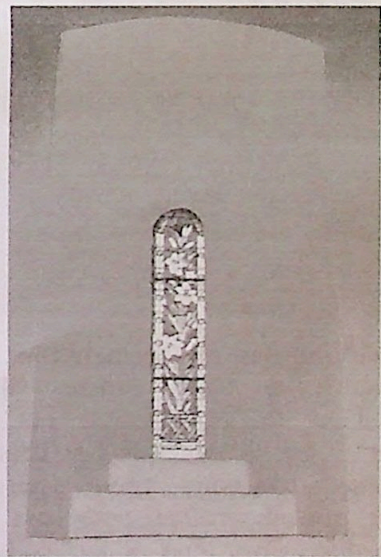
There is also a tomb with the impression of a lady, which is presumably where a brass has been removed at the Reformation, under the carpet close to the font, to the South of the harmonium site (see plan p.9).

The carpet also covers the grating which leads down to the old heating furnace. The verger used to get up very early on a Sunday morning to lift the grating and climb down to light the furnace so that the church had warmed up sufficiently for the morning services! The chimney issued through the tower roof until the tower restoration of 2009.

The font is not original: until the 1850s it was a square Norman font but by 1880 this had disappeared.

The bier was used to bring the deceased from the village for burial. It was languishing in a sad state in the shed until restored by Wilfred Hart, a parishioner, in the early 2000s.

High in the North wall is a lancet window which was uncovered during the 1883 restoration and is one of the original high Saxon windows which was



The Lancet Window

not removed with all the others which would have pierced the North, South and West walls before glass was commonly

available. It now has typical Arts and Crafts (late Victorian period) stained glass with blue cabochons. Inscribed below is "Laude Deo" (Praise God).

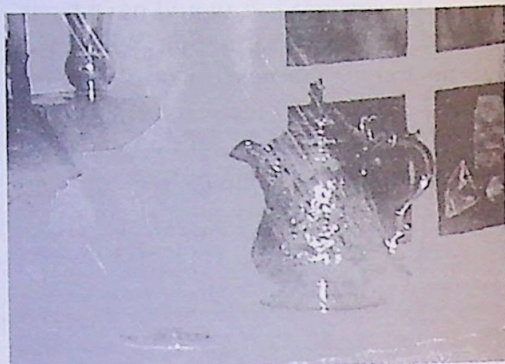
Further evidence of the church's Saxon origins is a piece of "spoil", i.e. rubbish from demolition of part of the church when being altered, some of which was incorporated into the rebuilding of the walls, and this can be seen to the right of the West window outside. It is a piece of masonry with a twisting Saxon decoration similar to some seen in the Saxon cemetery at Sutton Hoo.

The original font was square and Norman but this had disappeared by 1850 and been replaced by the Victorian one.



The Victorian replacement font

There is a very ornate silver communion flagon, allowed out on special occasions, which is now kept in the cathedral treasury. There is also a leather, tooled chalice case and an Elizabethan silver cup 5 inches high inscribed "The Parishes of Gosbeck" and, around the top, "Honore Gloria Laudes Deo" (Praises for God with Honour and Glory) and, below it "John Burges".



The communion flagon



The Elizabethan chalice

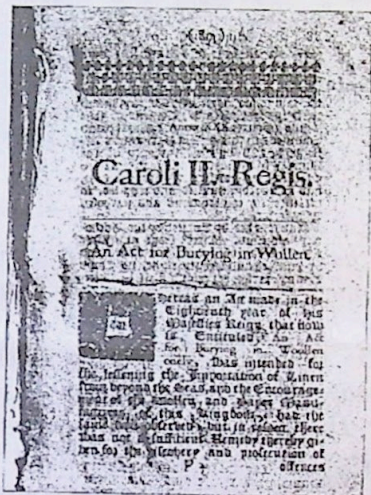
The memorial on the North wall is in memory of the villagers of Gosbeck who lost their lives fighting for our freedom in the first World War of the 20th century. There are two war graves in the churchyard to the East of the chancel, which are maintained by the War Graves Commission

Below you can see a photocopy of the original certificate from 1730, issued to churches complying with the regulation for burial of the deceased in woollen shrouds.

The text is as follows:

*Anno XXX
Caroli II Regis
An Act for Burying in Wollen*

Whereas an Act made in the Eighteenth year of his Majesties onely, was intended for the lessening the Importation of linen from beyond the Seas, and the Encouragement of the Wollen and Paper Manufactures of this Kingdom, had the same been observed, but in respect there was not a sufficient Remedy thereby given for the discovery and prosecution of offences. Reign that now is, Entituled, An Act for Burying in Wollen



GOSBECK.
Order for Burying in Woolen.

The pope decreed that there was to be a rood screen in each church and this was to have a rood, or crucifix, at the centre with John on one side and Mary on the other. It was to be substantial enough to have a walkway across it to allow for the lighting of candles on its edges. They were used for reading from the Gospels and sometimes for benedictions. Some of these were destroyed at the Reformation but the base of the rood screen was still in situ in St. Mary's in 1829, according to the record of David Elisha Davy. The remaining part of the

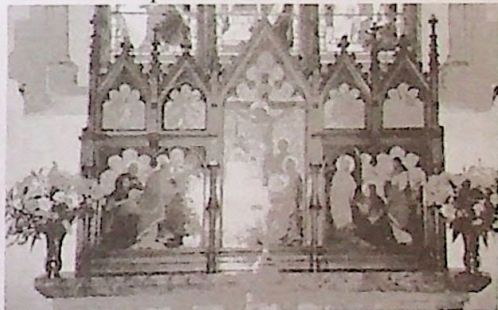
rood screen, currently on the North wall of the chancel, with traces of its original



The remaining panel of the 1560s rood screen

mediaeval paint, was behind the altar as a reredos until the Victorian restoration, when the medieval-style Victorian one was installed.

The tracery of this panel is perpendicular in style and the centre shield is the most important because it is heraldic.



The Victorian reredos

The Victorian imitation medieval reredos is in gesso, with the crucifixion in the centre and the depiction of a miracle on either side: the raising of Jairus, the centurion's daughter, on the left and Lazarus on the right with two angels hovering above.

There are two drawings of the South side of the church from the 19th century: the earlier one, by Isaac Johnson of

Woodbridge, is in pen and sepia wash and shows a double window to the right



Isaac Johnson's drawing of 1822

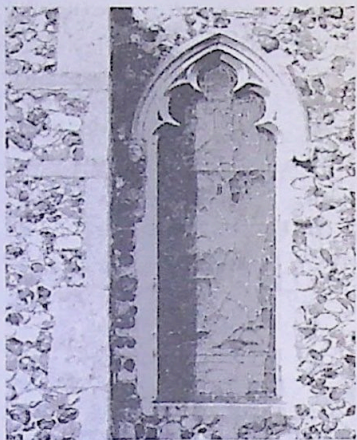
of the chancel door and the later one, an etching by Henry Davy, shows the single one. (It is interesting to note that the walls of the nave and chancel are rendered, as they were prior to 1884.)



Henry Davy's etching

This later, single window has the 1905 stained glass image of St. Mary, which is very like Our Lady of Walsingham. The companion window, on the other side of the door, clearly larger than the one on the two drawings, is 'The King of Love' and is of the same date.

The illustration also shows clearly the Saxon Long and Short work mentioned above.



The King of Love

Beneath Davy's etching is the following information:

Gosbeck Church Suffolk S.E.

Patroness Mrs. Attwood

Pastor the Revd. George Capper M.A.

Inscriptions in the church for the family of Dove. John Dove, Gent, died March 13th 1735 Aged 75 years, also in memory of Thomas and Penelope his Father and Mother. Drawn etched and published by Henry Davy, Globe Street, Ipswich, August 7, 1844. (This was at the bottom end of George Street where the Globe Inn still stands, although no longer a hostelry.)

The patron of our church is now Pembroke College.

In 1891, the new East window was installed (and the West window is likely to have been replaced at the same time).

The rose window at the top shows the Annunciation. At the bottom, from left to right, are the Birth of Jesus with the Three Kings, the Presentation of Jesus in the temple and Simeon, lastly the Baptism of Jesus by John using a scallop shell.



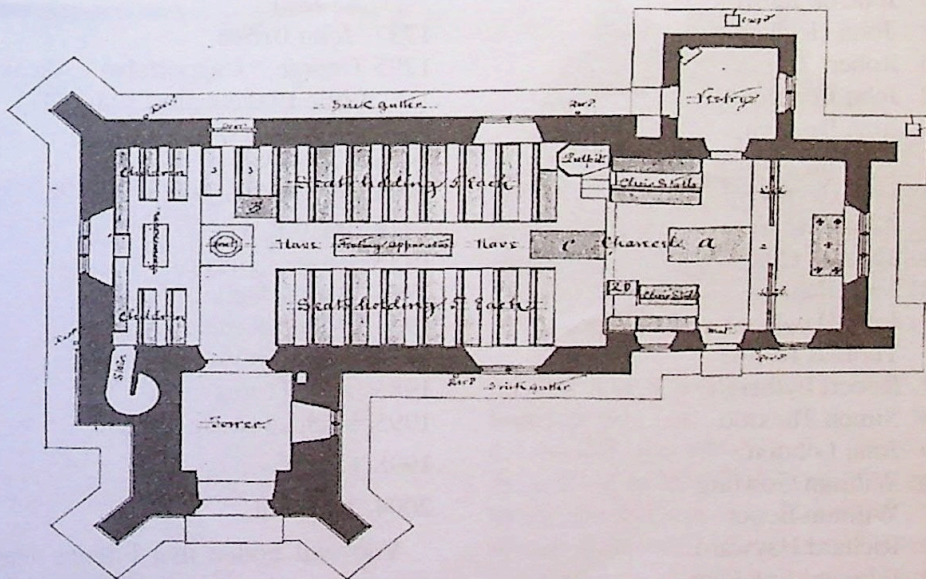
The East window

The centre three are: the Resurrection, watching in the garden, the Crucifixion and the Ascension. Dated 1891 and made by Heaton, Butler and Bayne of

Portobello Works, London, the inscription reads:

"To the glory of God and in loving memory of Frances Elizabeth Barry, dedicated by her husband and children, August 8th 1891."

The large windows in the North and South walls, although similar, are not identical if the mullions are compared. The one on the South side has stained glass upper panels, installed in the 2000s, representing the four seasons. The Christmas Rose, *helleborus niger*, for winter, is in memory of Mrs. Eileen Horton who, for a long time, worshipped with us at St. Mary's. The three others are in memory of the Rev. W.K.Munday, erstwhile rector of Coddendam with Gosbeck, and his two sisters. He is also commemorated on a brass plate on the end of a choir stall on the North side of the chancel.



The above plan is in the vestry and dates to February 1864. It is the architect's

plan for the restoration and re-seating and shows the harmonium at the back

between the rows of seats reserved for the children (the capacity of the church at this time was 128, including 15 in the choir stalls!). It also shows the positions of the burials under the floor mentioned on pages 4-5, the one in the chancel, at (a), having the memorial "*Here lieth the body of John Dove, Gent, who departed this life the 13th of March 1753, aged 75 years, and also the body of Thomas and Penelope, father and mother of the above said John Dove*". At (b) is another Dove memorial, not far from the north door, which says "*Here lieth ye body of Mr. John Dove who departed*

this life ye 6th of August 1719, aged 84." The plan also notes the matrix of the brass inscription at (c).

On the side of the rector's desk is a memorial to Hannah Lilley. We do not know of such a person locally but there was one in Acton, near Sudbury, and we surmise that it may have been imported from there in Victorian times, especially as it appears that there has been an attempt at removing the memorial, one screw head having broken off.

Rectors of Gosbeck:

1246 Henry de Campden
 1286 Robert de Rheims
 1305 John le Mustarder
 1318 John de Okham
 1332 John de Jermy
 1361 John Hocham
 1375 Robert Trusse
 1382 John Bertelot
 1399 John Bruntynge
 1426 William Palmer
 1444 John Germy
 1447 Adam Sabyn
 1448 Thomas Cole
 1458 John Hankyn
 1459 John Hawkyn
 1471 Thomas Holme
 1487 Robert Pylbergh
 1503 Simon Thexton
 1509 John London
 1520 William Gowling
 1567 William Boner
 1571 Richard Hayward
 1572 Edmund Franklyn
 1573 Andrew Kindelmarshe (also Rector of Coddenham (1578-1629))

1614 Thomas Matthew
 1621 George Burrough
 1657 Francis Daynes (ejected 1662)
 1674 Thomas Browning
 1720 Thomas Bishop (also vicar of St. Mary-le-Tower, Ipswich 1707-1737)
 1737 John Broke
 1795 George Capper (also Vicar of Little Blakenham 1794-1847)
 1847 W. H. Attwood
 1879 Foster Stable Barry
 1899 Henry Roberts
 1928 Basil Keymer
 1935 Charles Bacon
 1960 Arthur Holton
 1964 Walter Kenneth Munday
 1974 Rodney Owens
 1985 David Cutts
 1995 Michael Stone (NSM)
 1998 Roy Howe
 2004 Tim Hall

You will notice that Francis Daynes was ejected from office in 1662, probably for refusing to sign the Act of Uniformity. He remained in the Rectory,

however, until his death in 1674. Ministers put in during the interregnum and who were ejected in 1662 were puritans who refused to sign up to the Act of Uniformity. "Some of the darkest days that the Church of Christ on this earth has ever known were those days surrounding the Puritan ejection of 1662. An act of Uniformity had been passed by Charles II, and the refusal to conform to the strictures of religion "as established by law" meant immediate withdrawal of all rights to hold any pastoral charge or to exercise the work of the ministry. "For conscience sake," many men felt that they could never bow the knee to what was required of them, and on "Black Bartholomew's Day" 1662, these "Puritans" were driven from their pulpits, churches and homes."

As the primary purpose of the tower was to house the church bells, it is interesting to note that the single bell is inscribed to indicate that it was cast in 1879 by Taylors of Loughborough, when F.S. Barry was the incumbent and H. Mayhew was churchwarden.



The single bell

In 1553 there were three bells in this church, however David Davy on his visit on 8 May 1824 noted one bell inscribed 'Sancta Maria ora pro nobis' (Saint Mary pray for us). With such an inscription, this is unlikely to have been anything other than a pre-reformation bell.

Until the 1920s, houses in the village might well have had a clause in their deeds saying that they were liable for chancel repairs. This was then abolished by law. It seems all the stranger when one learns that the chancel was the preserve of the rector and the patron and the nave was the responsibility of the congregation.

The vestry and chancel were rebuilt at least twice during the Victorian period. One plan (1829) shows the vestry to be



View from the N.E. showing vestry

missing and it was rebuilt in 1848, the foundations of it having been discovered, according to the plaque on the outside of the North wall. It is more likely that this was done in 1884 and the plaque is in error. A cinquefoil-cusped Y-traceried window, with the appearance of c.1300, has apparently been re-set in the E. wall of the

Victorian N. vestry. This may have been recovered from a demolished building. A flagpole was also installed in the centre of the tower at about this time, with four stays to support it. This became unstable in the 1990s and was removed for safety's sake.

To help to encourage and ensure the survival of Gosbeck churchyard's native flora, some areas are left unmown to allow wild flowers to flourish and seed. Please avoid trampling on them if you walk outside. There is the lesser celandine, whose star-like yellow flowers appear from early spring, the primrose, the cowslip and the common violets. Later in the year can be seen the goldilocks, a buttercup recognised by having two different sets of leaves, and the ox-eye daisy, a large daisy with spoon-shaped leaves growing on old pasture, especially in heavy soil, and sometimes called the dog daisy because it flowers during the dog days of early July. In addition to these, we have been fortunate to have occasional sightings of the early purple orchid and the bee orchid, the latter first seen in 1988.

"St. Mary sits in its graveyard surrounded by fields, the air full of

birdsong and the rustle of leaves. The solid 14th century tower is one of Suffolk's south-west ones.

Stepping through the curtains, we find a well-kept, trim Victorian church. The reredos is grand and sentimental; the copious glass is solemn and rather moving. It is all done well.

Some panels from the former rood screen are attached to the north wall, and outside the church you'll find some very unusual red-brick gravestones, just to the west of the nave.

All in all, this an excellent example of a good village church - not historically or artistically significant, perhaps, but well cared-for, and a vital heart of its community."



The brick graves

He seems to have approved and enjoyed his visit. We hope you do too.