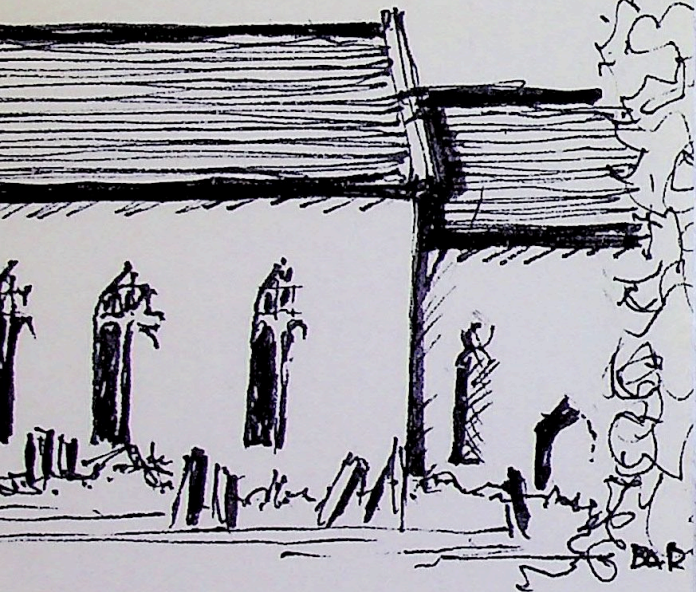


St Mary's Church, Chediston, is part of the Blyth Valley Team Ministry.

More information, including times of services, may be obtained by visiting www.blythvalleychurches.org.uk

For more information about bells and bell ringing in the Blyth Valley Team and in Suffolk, visit www.suffolkbells.org.uk

For information about Chediston and our neighbouring community of Linstead, visit the Parish Council website on www.chediston.suffolk.gov.uk



This guide has been produced as part of the St. Mary's bell restoration and tower repair project. The project has been funded through many private donations, by charitable organisations and by generous grants, including those from the following:

- Central Council of Church Bell Ringers
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- Ganzoni Trust
- Heritage Lottery Fund
- National Churches Trust
- Suffolk Churches Capital Fund
- Suffolk Guild of Ringers
- Suffolk Historic Churches Trust

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St Mary's Church

Chediston, Suffolk

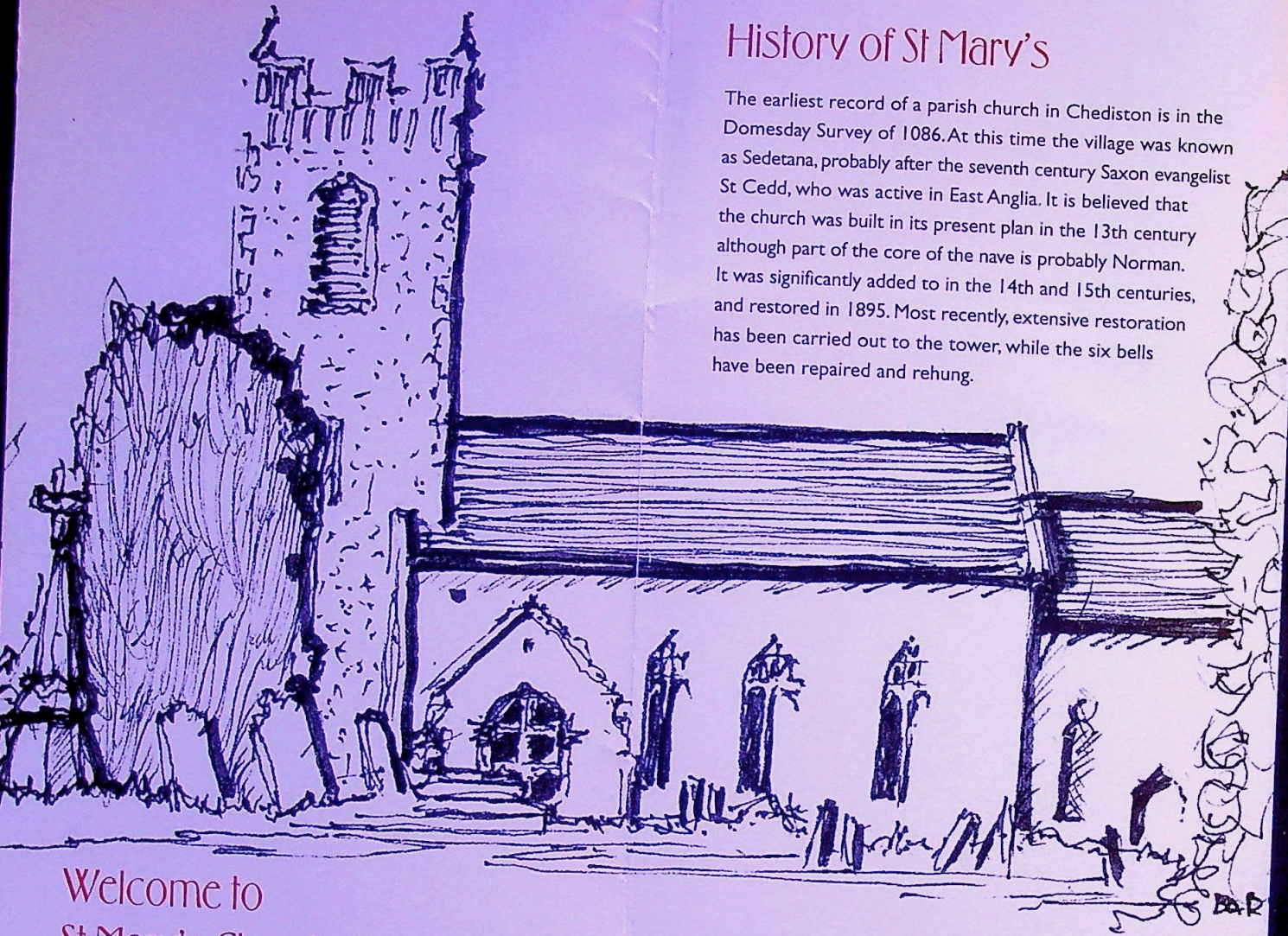


Friends of the Suffolk Historic Churches Trust



History of St Mary's

The earliest record of a parish church in Chediston is in the Domesday Survey of 1086. At this time the village was known as Sedetana, probably after the seventh century Saxon evangelist St Cedd, who was active in East Anglia. It is believed that the church was built in its present plan in the 13th century although part of the core of the nave is probably Norman. It was significantly added to in the 14th and 15th centuries, and restored in 1895. Most recently, extensive restoration has been carried out to the tower, while the six bells have been repaired and rehung.



Welcome to St Mary's Church, Chediston

Enter St Mary's church and you find yourself in an ancient site of Christian worship. This quiet church, in a peaceful and remote part of Suffolk, has been the focus of daily life and prayer for a thousand years or more, and it continues to be loved and cared for by the people of Chediston.

We hope you will enjoy your visit and find a moment of calm here in the midst of the busy life of 21st century Britain.



The nave has a blocked 14th century north doorway and renewed perpendicular windows while the chancel appears to be largely early 14th century with a small priest's door on the south side. There is a more modern vestry building to the north side, which conceals a Norman lancet.

The lower portion of the tower is 13th century, whereas the top was rebuilt towards the end of the 15th century. However, it remains unbuttressed and therefore retains its simple and rather primitive look. The entrance arch to the early 14th century porch is elegantly moulded and the capitals of the slim shafts are carved with foliage with an oak leaf and an acorn on the left. The inner doorway is a matching piece, and to its right there is a plain recess which held a stoup, or basin for holy water. There are two more stoup recesses in the south wall inside the church.



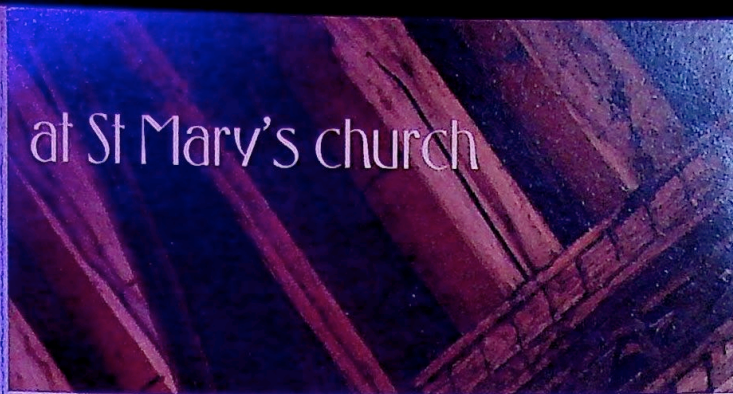
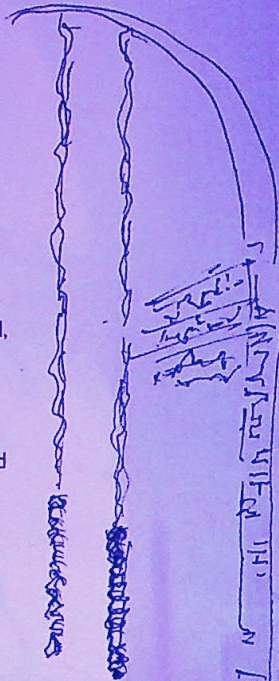
There is a wealth of history at St Mary's church

Two **chests** exist. One, situated by the south door, is Jacobean and is used for storage and as a book table. The other chest is a 14th century churchwardens' chest hewn from an upended tree trunk with the grain of the wood running vertically. It has two locks in the front and one on either side.

The remarkably intact **font** is 15th century and is of a traditional East Anglian type. The panels of the octagonal bowl are carved with evangelistic symbols and angels with shields bearing symbols of the Trinity (south west) and Passion (south east). Lions and woodwoses (hairy men wielding clubs) guard the shaft.

On the north wall, just rear of the most westerly window and high in the wall beyond the 14th century bricked-up north door, is an early **wall fresco** of a large head believed to represent that of St Christopher. It was

discovered during restoration works in 1895 when some plaster was removed. The painting was found to be damaged, probably long before, when one of the early 16th century windows was inserted. Now barely discernible, the wall painting hints at how the interior of the church may have been decorated before the Reformation.

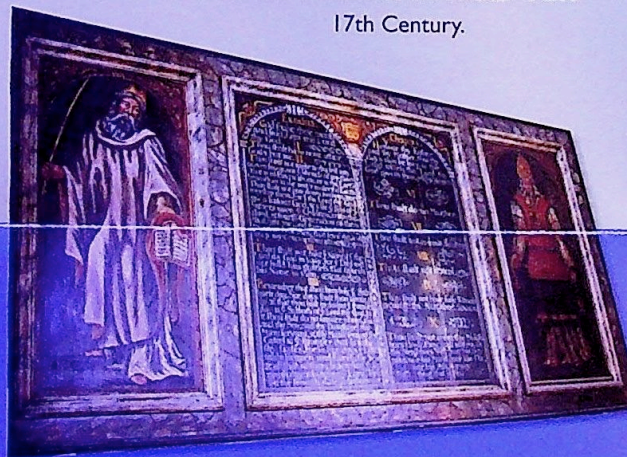


The high pitched 15th century 8-bay arch-braced nave **roof** is very similar to that of the now redundant church in Ubbeston so that it is thought the same craftsmen probably made it. Interesting survivals of the pulleys in the roofs for the rowell remain in several Suffolk churches, including Chediston. The rowell was a sort of chandelier suspended in front of the rood. The figures of angels which once graced the roof beams were ruthlessly removed during the great period of destruction which occurred in Suffolk's churches during the 16th and 17th centuries.

The **communion rails** are early 17th Century and highly regarded. In 1633 Bishop Wren, sent to the Norwich Diocese by Archbishop William Laud, issued an order that "the Rayle be made before the

Communion Table reaching Crosse from the North Wall to the South Wall, neere one yard in height, so thick with pillars that doggs may not gett in."

Chediston's communion rail dates from this period and is described by Munro Cautley in *Suffolk Churches and their Treasures* as "probably the finest in Suffolk". The carvings depict pendant acorn shapes above sharp obelisks as spacers between the turned shafts. The altar is also 17th Century.



The 17th century wooden **commandment panel** depicting Moses and Aaron now hangs on the north wall. It previously hung at the west end of the church, but was at the east end in the chancel before that. The panel was fully restored and rehung in its present position in 1989.

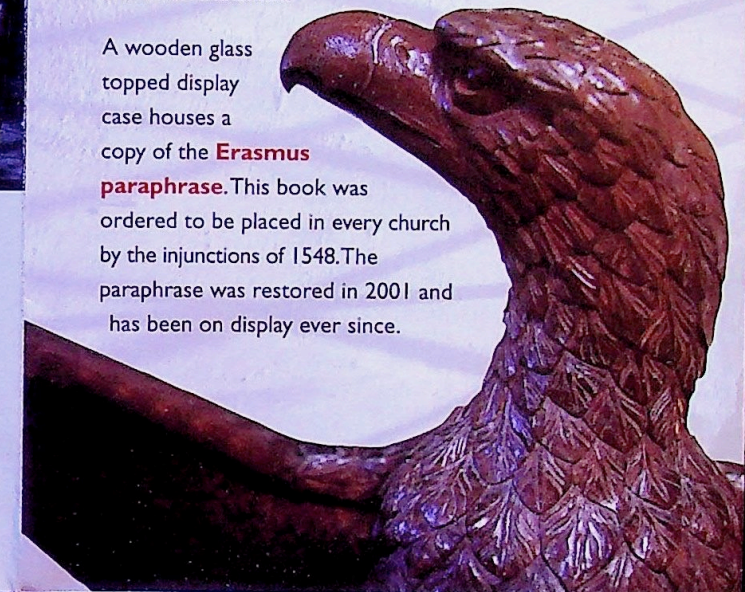
The **angle piscina** in the sanctuary is 14th century. A basin with a drain for the disposal of holy water, it has been heavily restored and only the jamb shaft is old stone. However, it probably repeats the original design. Note how the south wall of the chancel has been scooped out to obtain greater width.



Ejected from Cookley church when that church was restored in 1894 because it was regarded as "inharmonious with its surroundings," the **pulpit** is a particularly attractive piece of 17th century wood carving. Canon A Roland Upcher, rector of Halesworth and vicar of Chediston, rescued it from oblivion in a barn and brought it safe to Chediston. This handsome

pulpit with its little curving stair is dated 1637. It is a twin of Rumburgh's pulpit and thought to have been made by the same craftsman.

A wooden glass topped display case houses a copy of the **Erasmus paraphrase**. This book was ordered to be placed in every church by the injunctions of 1548. The paraphrase was restored in 2001 and has been on display ever since.



Although the 16th century oak bell frame was originally designed for four **bells**, the tower appears not to have had more than three bells for over 300 years. The oldest of these dated from 1572 but being seriously cracked, it was recast by John Warner & Sons of London in 1897 at the expense of Helen and Emma Tuck. This bell constitutes the present tenor.

The oldest bell still in its original form is the 5th, by John Brend II of Norwich, which dates from 1640. For many years this bell was cracked but it was repaired in 2008 by Soundweld of

The arms of the Baxter family depicted in the east window are considered to be late 16th or early 17th century. The **oldest window** in the church is at the east end of the south wall of the chancel and is thought to be 13th century with small traces of ancient glass, one section showing the arms of the Mowbray family.



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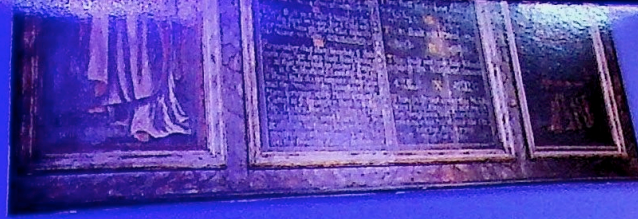


The stained glass window in the south wall of the nave was produced by the workshop of the Rope cousins, two female Suffolk stained glass artists who were working in the early and middle years of the 20th century. This particular war memorial window of 1949 is by Margaret Edith Rope. It depicts St George and St Felix of East Anglia above the seals of the RAF Bomber Squadron and the Borough of Dunwich, and lovely rural Suffolk scenes in the background - ploughing behind St George and harvesting behind St Felix. The window was given in memory of the late Wing Commander S R Groom whose family lived at Chediston Grange. It was dedicated by the then Archdeacon of Leicester.



All the windows in the south and east side of the church were blown out by a German bomb which exploded in the adjoining meadow. It is because of this that there is a small section of 15th century glass in the upper part of the window next to the one with stained glass and that the glass in the east window is incomplete.

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The **registers** from St Mary's Church date from 1630 and the first recorded vicar was Thomas de Chotesham (1299-1306). The living was consolidated with Halesworth on 5th October 1743.

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Thanks to the generosity of the Tuck sisters a fourth bell, also cast by John Warner & Sons, was added in 1897, when the old frame was strengthened and new bell fittings were made by G Day & Son of Eye. An active band of bell ringers quickly saw to it that the ring was augmented by the addition of two trebles, the first

in 1907 commemorating the Tuck sisters and the second (the present treble) in 1911 commemorating the coronation of George V. Both bells are by Bowell of Ipswich, who modified the old frame.

By the late 20th century the bell frame, bells and fittings had deteriorated badly. Full circle ringing ceased in the 1970s and for many years only three bells were chimed for services. Then in 2008, thanks to active local fundraising and a number of generous donations and grants, work started on the restoration, retuning and rehanging of all six bells in a new steel frame by Nicholsons of Bridport. The bells were re-dedicated on 15th March 2009.

