



A history

of

All Saints Church, Ashbocking

1086—Present

There is mention in the Doomsday Book (1086) of a Church with 19 acres of land at Ashbocking. The present Chancel dates from the 13th century, whilst the Nave is thought to have been built by John de Bocking in the time of Edward III.

The Tower and the Porch were built by Edmund Bocking in 1580. The west doors are original. The pews in the Nave are oak, 17th century, but a few 13th century pew ends remain to the west of the Font. Those in the Chancel were installed at the time of a big restoration operation in 1870-1873 when the old ceiling was taken out, the roof repaired, and new boarding placed under the tiles. The Pulpit also dates from this period.

The Saxon Font Bowl was discovered under rough brick and plaster during a restoration in 1842, and was then placed on the present round Norman-style pillars and octagonal base. The big iron bound chest, or Parish Purse, dates from the early 14th century.

On the south wall, to the left of the porch door and very high up, hang the Royal Arms of King Charles I, placed there by the Royalist Vicar Theodore Beadle. He died in prison for refusing to change his views. The Arms were restored by the Parishioners to Commemorate the Silver Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II in 1977.

On the same side of the Nave you will see a very beautiful 14th century arch over a small window. This is thought to have been part of a memorial or tomb to John de Bocking, or members of the Bocking family. Notice all the carved heads and faces. The arches each have a different design. The Bocking family came about 1328 and owned much of the parish until Edmund died, when the property was divided between his two daughters.

Opposite to the arch, on the north wall, is placed a fine brass to the memory of the last of the Bockings, Edmund Bocking, who died in on 10th August 1585. With him are two wives and two daughters. These deaths are recorded in the Church Registers which are deposited at the Suffolk Records Office.

On the floor, just in front of the Communion rails and beside the small door, is a Brass in the form of an acrostic to the memory of Thomas Horsman, born 1556, died 1619.

On the south wall of the Sanctuary, notice the Sedilia. Opposite to this on the north wall of the Sanctuary and above the Aumbry is a memorial tablet to Maurice Byles Cowell - Canon of Norwich Cathedral and Vicar of Ashbocking from 1862 to 1919. Canon Cowell was a member of the Cowell family of Ipswich and did much for the Church and for the Parish generally.

The Sanctuary lamps, flag pole and porch lamp were given to commemorate the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria. The hanging lamps in the Nave and the lights on the Pulpit and Reading Desk were installed at the time of the Coronation of King Edward VII. The hanging lamps and the Sanctuary lamps were converted to electricity in 1961.

The embroidered kneelers were made by members of the congregation and show the monogram and dates of former Vicars, starting in 1326. The centre Communion kneeler has a design adapted from one of the Gable crosses and is dedicated to "All those who have served and worked for the Church at Ashbocking, and whose names we do not know".

The Cross, Candlesticks and Flower Pedestal were presented to the Church in 1984. The green Altar Frontal, and Pulpit and Lectern falls were embroidered in the Parish to commemorate more than 900 years of Christian worship on this site, and dedicated in June 1986 as a beginning for the next 900 years.

There is an excellent peal of six bells, installed in 1904 by John Taylor & Co. of Loughborough. The Tenor bell was recast from the old cracked bell dated 1585.

When you leave the Church, notice the Piscina in the porch and, on the outside over the entrance, a stone Angel bearing the text "Gather my Saints together unto me" (Psalm 50). This, with the ancient form of Chi-Ro seen in the east window, was the inspiration for the design on the Altar frontal.

We hope that you have enjoyed the peace and beauty of our Church and its surroundings. Please sign the Visitors Book before you leave that we too may take pleasure in the fact that you have visited our old, and to us, very precious Church.

Any contribution, however small, towards the upkeep of our lovely Church would be much appreciated.

Thank you.