

WELCOME to St Mary's! We hope that you will enjoy the beauty, interest and living history to be found both outside and inside and that this little guide will tell you something of its story and point you to some of its treasures. (*If you wish to use this as a 'walk-round' guide, please turn to page ???*). Above all, we hope that you will feel thoroughly 'at home' here in our Father's House, which Mendlesham folk have tended and cherished for 800 years or more. This is no mere museum or ancient monument, but is a living, working building, still in daily use for Christian worship and witness – the purpose for which it was built. Centuries of prayer have saturated its walls and made it holy and its present-day visitors and pilgrims enter a building which is loved, cared-for, wanted and used.

Those whose spiritual home this is are glad that you have come to see and enjoy it. They thank you for the prayers that you may have kindly offered for them and the work of the Church here, and for any gift that you have placed in the wall-safe which will help them maintain St Mary's, intact and beautiful, for future generations to use and to enjoy.

May God bless you

How Old is the Church?

The answer to this very reasonable question is far from simple, because St Mary's, like all our mediaeval churches, has gradually evolved over the centuries, as people of different periods and Christian traditions have altered and beautified it and have left their mark upon it.

From what we can see in the building itself and from what little documentary evidence we have, some of the landmarks in the church's long history are as follows:-

1086 – The Domesday Survey mentions the existence of a church at Mendlesham, which almost certainly stood on the site of the present church and which was probably already well-established here. It may well be, therefore, that Christians have worshipped on the spot for 1000 years or more. It is recorded that King William II in 1095 conferred this church into the care of the monks of Battle Abbey, in Sussex.

The 1200s – From what must have been a major rebuilding during the early years of this century we have the nave arcades and the north and south doorways, which show high-quality Early English craftsmanship. The eastern bay is separated from the rest of the arcade by a short length of wall, which has led some to believe that this area formed the crossing at the heart of a cruciform church, with a central tower.

The 1300s – Around 1300s the south and west windows, with their simple 'Y' tracery, were placed in the south aisle. Its east window has beautiful net-like 'reticulated tracery, fashionable about 1330 but here set beneath a depressed (more shallow) arch, suggesting the late 1300s. The south chancel windows, together with the north aisle and clerestory windows all have a similar tracery design and are set beneath depressed arches, showing the gradual evolution from Decorated architecture (in the tracery) to Perpendicular (in the shape of the arch). These probably date from the late 1300s, after the nation had recovered from the Black Death and when Mendlesham was developing as a small market town. Money was left in 1391 towards 'fenestr' (windows) in the chancel.

The 1400s – This was a great period of church building in Suffolk, producing some of the grandest 15th century Perpendicular churches and the finest use of flint and stone 'flushwork' decoration in England. This is seen here in Mendlesham's glorious tower and in the two (very unidentical) porches, which date from the late 1400s, when Perpendicular design and craftsmanship was at its zenith. Several generous donors left bequests towards

the tower between 1487 and 1515, when Robert Garneys left 40 shillings for the ‘glassynge (glazing) of the steeple’ indicating that it was receiving the finishing touches. The chancel’s east and north windows, also the beautiful east window in the Lady Chapel are also Perpendicular, but possibly a little earlier. Benefactions towards a reredos above the high altar in 1454 and 1458 show that work was then taking place in the chancel.

The 1500s – Sometime around 1500 a very handsome rood screen was erected at the division of nave and chancel (with a rood-loft and great rood crucifix above) and parclose screens around the north and south chapels. These have long disappeared, although there is evidence in the stonework marking where parts of them fitted. What does remain is the staircase to the rood-loft, set within a turret of mellow Tudor brick, probably of the early 1500s. A will of 1516 bequeaths money ‘to the making of the roof’.

How glorious the interior must have looked in the early 1500s – a kaleidoscope of colour and carving, with pictures in stained glass, wall-paintings, woodcarvings and other materials providing a host of visual-aids to teach the Faith to mediaeval folk who could not read the Latin of the scriptures for themselves. Much of this was swept away by the Reformers, with their emphasis on the written word and their dislike of the old visual-aids. In the 1540s, chantry chapels, rood-lofts and crucifixes, images and stone altars were abolished by law. Rather than break up their great altar-slab, Mendlesham folk buried it in the floor of the church. In 1593, Bartholomew Knights was paid 16 pence for providing and installing woodwork in the north porch chamber ‘for ye well hanging up of ye Towne Armour’.

The 1600s – Gradually the interior was furnished for the plain and Prayer Book worship of the Church of England ‘by Law Established’. St Mary’s was however fortunate in having a parishioner, John Turner, a talented woodcarver, who fashioned its font-cover in 1630 and its pulpit in 1631 – both showing craftsmanship of the highest quality.

More beautiful craftsmanship was mutilated and destroyed by the Puritans in 1643-44 in their zeal to rid our churches of ‘superstitious images and inscriptions’. Although their inspector, William Dowsing, does not record a visit to Mendlesham, the parishioners clearly took action in case they were inspected and the Churchwardens’ Accounts record payments in 1644 for reglazing the windows.

C1700-1864 – When the antiquarian Tom Martin visited the church in 1735, he noticed over the west door of the tower the inscription ‘BRICEI BOVNWING FUIT ARTIBUS ILLE MAGISTER ASTRAPIA. NOIMINA AN DNI 1631’. He recorded that there were five bells and chimes and a clock; at that time the chancel roof was tiled and the other roofs were leaded. His notes also mention ‘*A very large stone under the roodloft, which never had an inscription on it, so probably an altar..... A beam once across the middle isle before the roodloft – if not the candlebeam’..... At the east end of the chancel is an area of ground moated in, where stood the Knivets Hall, as I was told*’. One wonders if parts of the rood-loft had survived, or – more likely – he was referring to the canopy of honour in the eastern bay of the nave roof.

David Elisha Davy of Ufford visited St Mary’s in June 1831 and his detailed notes give us an impression of what the church was like before its major restoration. Above the Communion Table, which was enclosed in three-sided rails, were the Lord’s Prayer, Creed and Commandments, which formed an altarpiece. The pulpit stood against the 2nd pillar from the east on the south side and at the west end was a small gallery, above which in the boarded-up tower arch were the Royal Arms of King George III. The brass plate recording the charities was fixed to the first pillar from the east on the north side. Of the canopy of honour he writes, ‘*The roof over the rood loft is wainscoted and painted with IHSs in compartments*’. The west end of the south aisle was enclosed to

form a vestry and over its door was painted 'R Mayhew, L Denny, Churchwardens 1735'. In the vestry hung a board on which was painted 'A Table of Fees due at this Church of Mendlesham'. In the north aisle, the doorway to the rood-loft staircase was 'now stopt up', in the north-east angle hung the hatchment of John Sheppard of Ash, who was buried here in 1747, and a doorway led to the room above the porch, 'in which are some remains of armour'. He may have been the John Sheppard who presented the parish with a fire engine and 26 leather buckets for water, which were kept in the church. They are recorded in Terriers in 1770 and 1866, but not in 1879. (A splendid fire engine may still be seen in Worlingworth church and Haughley church still has its leather fire-buckets).

The *Ipswich Journal's* comments about the church before its restoration indicate that the pulpit was much taller than it now is and was almost certainly a three-decker arrangement, also that some of the mediaeval benches were covered up and hidden by box-pews.

1851 – The Religious Census took place, recording numbers attending services in churches and chapels on Sunday March 30th throughout the land. Numbers were down at St Mary's due to the 'unsettled weather' Morning attendance was 49, plus 80 scholars, with 169 and 79 scholars at the afternoon service. Dr Day, the vicar, noted that the average adult congregations were 75 in the morning and 245 in the afternoon. The size of the church was mentioned, and that there there was accommodation for 249 in rented pews and 212 in seats free of pew-rents. It was added that if 'properly pewed' the church could hold 1000 or more! The Holy Communion was then celebrated quarterly, with about 38 communicants on Easter Day. The three nonconformist chapels in Mendlesham had extremely healthy congregations, the total adult attendance being 210 Methodists, 500 Congregationalists and 280 at the Jireh Baptist Chapel at Mendlesham Green.

1864-66 – During this period the church underwent a thorough restoration, which took place in two stages. The chancel was the first to receive attention. Its decaying south-east corner was carefully taken down and rebuilt, the windows were repaired where necessary and a new east window was provided, also a completely new roof. The chancel was furnished with new choir-stalls and the old three-sided communion-rails were replaced with oak rails upon wrought-iron standards by Francis Skidmore & Co. of Coventry.

The second phase involved the remainder of the church. The nave roof, which was in a dangerous state, was completely replaced, although the old aisle roofs were preserved. All the box-pews were removed, including those concealing the mediaeval benches, which reverted to their original positions and were supplemented by new deal benches. The walls were re-plastered, the stonework of the font was refaced and new floors were made. The tower arch was opened up and the gallery in front of it was removed. The vestry area, with an oak screen in which was set some tracery from the old benches, was moved to the eastern end of the south aisle. The pulpit was lowered and given a new stone base and steps, an oak reading desk (described as 'for the most part new) and lectern were provided. The organ, formerly in the west gallery, was moved to the south side, near the entrance to the chancel. In cleaning and repairing the walls, the recess at the base of the north aisle's east window was discovered and opened up.

The architect for both phases of the restoration was Ewan Christian of London – a prolific architect of national repute, who designed several new churches and was responsible for the restoration of about 350 others – Bures, Hoxne and Wingfield being amongst his Suffolk commissions. The contractor was Mr F Betts of Stowmarket and the cost was over £1,000.

The Re-Opening Services took place on 25th September 1866 – a day of great celebration, when in Mendlesham the shops were shut ‘and all business suspended’. The Holy Communion was celebrated at 8.30am (at which the collection realised £9). At the 11am service the Bishop of Norwich preached, the Revd George Cosby White (vicar of the Anglo-Catholic stronghold of St Barnabas Pimlico) ‘intoned’ the prayers, together with the Revd Edmund Manwaring White (vicar) and the Revd Addison Hemsworth (rector of Rockland St Andrew, Norfolk). The collection raised £24.9s – a considerable sum in those days. The vicar of St Barnabas Pimlico preached at the final service, held in the afternoon.

1909-10 - The first steps were taken to restore and preserve the items of armour stored in the upper chamber of the north porch and to exhibit them for visitors to see. This was achieved by the Revd William Partridge (curate here 1906-10) and Mr Arthur Mayfield (Headmaster of the village school from 1896-1931). People were allowed to view the armour and were encouraged to leave donations in the box provided.

1912 – The roof and pinnacles of the tower underwent restoration and a lightning conductor was installed. The work was done by Cornish & Gaymer of North Walsham, under the direction of WD Caroe, at a cost of £174.

1921-22 - Major alterations took place when what was then called the ‘old guild chapel’ at the east end of the north aisle was furnished as a war memorial chapel. The Elizabethan Communion table was moved there from the sanctuary and was framed with riddel-posts and curtains. A new High Altar, equipped with cross and candlesticks, replaced it in the sanctuary. Oak communion rails were made for the chapel, given by Mrs Basket of Newmarket, whose husband was killed in the war. An oak wall-plaque was inscribed with the names of the fallen and the east window was filled with stained glass by TF Curtis of Ward & Hughes. The architect for the whole scheme was Harold King of Westminster. At the special afternoon service the plaque and window were unveiled by the Lord Lieutenant, Sir Courtenay Warner MP, of Brettenham Park and the newly-furnished chapel was dedicated by Canon Charles Lawrence, the former archdeacon.

1927-28 – The south porch underwent a thorough restoration by Bennett & Snare of Ipswich, to the designs of Professor Arthur Beresford Pite, in memory of churchwarden Miles Cutting, who died in 1926.

1932-54 - The Revd PTE Wareham, vicar during this period, was a skilled craftsman and undertook various minor repairs to floors, woodwork and windows himself. The tower screen, which was a memorial to his predecessor, was dedicated by Bishop Walter Whittingham on 26 May **1935**. It was designed by the bishop’s son – the Norwich architect Arthur Bensley Whittingham – and was made by Bennett & Snare of Ipswich at a total cost of £93.7s.1d.

Dr Hubert Pedlar, who lived for ten years at the Manor, gave part of his meadow adjoining the south end of the churchyard for a possible future churchyard extension in **1944**. Because of the difficulty in levelling this land, the churchyard extension was not consecrated until much later.

In **1947**, Ernest Barnes of Ipswich added the extra panel to the War Memorial, with the names of those who died during World War 2. During his final year here, Canon Wareham presented panelling in Suffolk oak for the Children’s Corner and carved the inscription on it himself.

The 1960s – In 1963 the oak panelling behind the High Altar was constructed by H & K Mabbitt of Colchester, who equipped the Lady Chapel with similar panelling in 1965.

The 1970s and 1980s – By gradual stages the interior was transformed and was enriched with ancient and

beautiful things no longer needed by other churches. In 1976 the font and benches from Rishangles church arrived and in 1981, mediaeval glass, benches, Royal Arms, communion rails, a brass and a chest were amongst treasures from Southolt church which were given a new lease of life here. The early 1980s saw the relocation of the organ and vestry and the creation of the Blessed Sacrament and Holy Cross Chapels. Iso over this period the aumbry for the Holy Oils, the nave altar, the shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham, the Rood Group, Stations of the Cross and pieces of fine craftsmanship arrived.

Exploring the Exterior

St Mary's is situated in the northern part of the large parish which it was built to serve (the hamlet of Mendlesham Green being at the southern end), which stretches some 3 ¼ miles north-south and 2 ½ miles from its western extremity to its eastern border which follows the A140.

It stands beside the highway at the eastern end of a beautiful village, whose streets of old and picturesque houses remind us that in mediaeval times this was a small and thriving market town. Ever since 1826, when the churchyard wall was taken down and rebuilt some 8' eastwards, the great west doorway has opened directly onto the street.

It stands in a large and atmospheric tree-shaded **CHURCHYARD**, which has been extended southwards for a considerable distance. The ditch beside its eastern border may have been part of the moat around the mediaeval hall. More recent Mendlesham folk are buried and commemorated in the northern part of the churchyard, but to the south of the church are several 18th century **CHEST TOMBS**, some surrounded by iron railings. Amongst the Mendlesham worthies commemorated on them are members of the Marriott family (including Robert, who died in 1707, aged 102), Richard Bacon Frank (1824), son of the Revd Edward Frank of Campsall (Yorks) and Earlham Hall, Norwich, members of the medical Cuthbert family and, on the handsome sarcophagus tomb, Frederick Dutton (1842) and Frederick Grimwade Gissing (1833). Above the Marriott vault in the angle between the chancel and the south aisle, enclosed in iron railings, are memorials to more 18th and 19th century Marriotts. Near the east end of the chancel are some **18th CENTURY HEADSTONES**.

Also on the south side is the **MEMORIAL TO THE AMERICAN AIRMEN** of the 3^{4th} Heavy bombardment Group of the United States Eighth Air Force, who died whilst stationed at Mendlesham Airfield in 1944-1945. The bronze memorial erected beside the A140 having been stolen in 2010, this memorial was placed here in 2014. Its slate inscription, carved by mark Bury of Cambridge, is set in a plinth of stone and knapped flints and shows a pilate (his face combining strength with compassion) in his cockpit.

It is worth standing back to admire the fine and noble **PROPORTIONS OF THE CHURCH** as a whole – its walls constructed of thousands of flints, with limestone from the east Midlands forming its windows, doorways and corners. The whole church, except the chancel, is crowned with embattled parapets, with an amazing array of carved faces forming **GARGOYLES** beneath the parapets, to throw rainwater clear of the walls. In the masonry of the tower and porches may be seen beautiful panelling and motifs fashioned in flint and stone **FLUSHWORK**. This is a feature of East Anglian churches and the finest flushwork anywhere is to be found here in Suffolk.

The windows of the **NORTH AISLE** were fashioned in the late 1300s, except its east window, which dates from the mid-1400s, the lower part of its middle light being blocked to contain the niche inside. In the angle of

the aisle and chancel is the rood-loft staircase turret, of mellow Tudor bricks, constructed in the late 1400s or early 1500s.

Above the aisles rises the clerestory of the **NAVE**, with five two-light windows, also of the late 1300s, and possibly part of a great re-ordering of the north aisle and the heightening of the nave. Unusually set in the nave's eastern parapet, and north of centre, is an aperture for the Sanctus Bell, which rang out at the climax of the daily Mass, to enable people unable to be present to pause and join in prayer. The present bell, replacing a bell from the rectory which is now in the armoury, was given in 2015.

There are two triple late 1300s windows and a priest's doorway on the south side of the **CHANCEL**, but its northern windows and its five-light east window are in the Perpendicular style of the mid 1400s. Set in its east wall is a plaque (with a cherub) to Isabella Shreeve, who died in 1771 and nearby is the chest-tomb of William Gibson (1737) and Martha (1767).

The two-light windows in the **SOUTH AISLE** date from c.1300 and have simple 'Y' tracery. Its east window has net-like 'reticulated' tracery (fashionable c.1330) but beneath a shallow arch of the late 1300s.

The **SOUTH PORCH** is a beautiful example of late 15th century craftsmanship in flint and stone. Its fine entrance arch is set beneath a square hood-mould, studded with tiny flowers and resting upon decapitated lion corbels, with blank shields in the spandrels between the hood-mould and the arch. The porch's south face and buttresses have fine flushwork in flint and stone and a central canopied niche for a statue. The flushwork includes a band of (four-lobed) quatrefoils and four 'M's – two plainer ones for St Margaret and two for Our Lady, with the special 'Maria' emblem, where the 'M' incorporates all the letters of Maria. Formerly there were two 'R's in flushwork at either end. The embattled parapet has the bases of the six pinnacles which once crowned it.

The crowning glory of St Mary's – and of the Mendlesham sky-line - rising 84 ½ feet to the top of the flushwork parapet and about 90 feet to the summit of the pinnacles, is its splendid **TOWER**. This is one of the grand towers of a design which is very much Suffolk, with similarities to the towers at Horham, Stonham Parva and others in the county, which have double flushwork parapets, twin belfry windows and other features in common. It is also massive – its west wall is 4 ¾ feet thick.

This tower is sturdy, with a feeling of great strength, but is also elegant – its profile enhanced by the diagonal buttresses which strengthen its four corners. On the south-west buttress (level with the top of the west window) is the rusty gnomon of a former sundial. The fine flushwork which graces several Suffolk and Norfolk churches – including the tower here – was designed and made by the Aldryche firm of master masons of North Lopham, Norfolk. Their trademark – a circle beneath a pair of dagger-shapes - may be seen in the south-west buttress – two of the array of panels with patterns and motifs, some in flushwork and some in carved stone, in the plinth which surrounds the base of the tower.

The great west doorway now opens directly onto the pavement, providing a meaningful direct link between the church and its community. Its graceful arch is flanked by shields with the arms of Sir John Knyvet, who died in 1417 and his wife Joan (daughter of Sir John de Botetort, Lord of the Manor) whose memory is perpetuated in this tower.

The three-light west window is elegant, albeit rather small in proportion. The clock face above it dates from

1886 but is backed by the frame for its early 18th century predecessor. Its chamber is lit by a small two-light southern window and there is a small door to the nave roof on the east side.

St Mary's tower is unusual in having two newel-staircases (although other fine towers, including those at Bungay and Woodbridge, have them). The tiny openings which light the lower staircase can be seen near the north-west corner and those lighting the upper staircase are near the east end of the south face.

The grand flushwork parapet is lined internally with Tudor brick and with re-used pieces of limestone – some inscribed with initials, including one set dated 1770.

The two-storeyed **NORTH PORCH**, although of a different design from its southern counterpart, is an even more splendid essay in late 15th century flushwork and stonecarving, graced by slender, elegant buttresses and lit by large triple Perpendicular windows. A pair of double windows in the north face (flanking a central canopied niche) light the upper parvise chamber which, since 1593, has been used to store the parish armour. Two further niches flank the grand entrance arch, which is studded with little flowers inside and out and has worn hanging shields in the spandrels each side of it. Grand flushwork adorns the north face, buttresses and embattled parapet, from which a small central northern angel looks out and above which at the four corners are four formidable creatures, which are remarkably well-preserved and certainly worth enjoying. Two are wild hairy men with clubs (known as wodewoses) and two are squatting creatures – maybe lions.

There is much to enjoy **INSIDE THE PORCH**. Its south-west corner is chamfered off for the staircase-vice to the upper chamber (this can also be seen in the angle outside). The sturdy roof may well have been renewed in the 1600s when the chamber above was fitted up as an armoury. To the left of the doorway is a painted list of recorded vicars and patrons from 1085. To the right is the font from Rishangles church which found a new home here in 1977. Although in the style of many East Anglian fonts, it is smaller, more slender and later than most of them. The clothes of the male and female figures around the stem were in fashion c.1530 and this may well be its date, although some have dated it c.1599, which is unlikely because the symbolism carved in the bowl panels was banned at the Reformation, i.e. the emblems of the four Evangelists - the Angel of S. Matthew (south-west), the winged Lion of S. Mark (north-west), the Ox of S. Luke (south-east) and the Eagle of S. John (north-east), alternating with emblems of Our Lord's Passion – hammer, pincers and pillar (east), heart, nails, purse and lantern (south), cross, spear and sponge (west) and scourges (north). Neither is it Victorian, because Davy very accurately described this font when he saw it at Rishangles in 1817.

It now serves as a Holy Water Stoup (the staircase abutment behind it has been cut away probably to contain Mendlesham's original stoup. Here we may, if wish to, dip our fingers into the Holy Water and make the Sign of the Cross as a reminder of our Baptism and as an act of symbolic cleansing and rededication as we enter the sacred building. Whether or not you do so, please feel welcome and at home here – whoever you are and whatever your faith may be.

The north doorway, by which we enter, was at least 200 years old when the porch was built and is fine Early English work of the 1200s (as is its southern counterpart).

What to See Inside the Church

Visitors and pilgrims do not easily forget St Mary's lofty, spacious and colourful interior, where an abundance of light from the clear glass of the windows illuminates a kaleidoscope of colours, textures, vistas and a host of beautiful craftsmanship from many periods. It is also clear that this is a building which is loved, used and prayed in, where so much of the beauty is here to draw us to our knees in wonder and worship. What is remarkable here is that what was already a beautiful interior has been enhanced over the past 40 years by treasures from other churches no longer needing them – giving them new life and use in this beautiful and devotional place.

The Structure

Standing at the west end, near the tower arch and enjoying this interior as a whole, we look down approximately 120 feet of church. The nave is c.81 ½ feet in length and the (comparatively long) chancel stretches a further 40 feet.

The aisles are divided from the nave by **ARCADES** of five bays, the arches rising from sturdy circular piers with moulded capitals and bases, dating from the 1200s. The exception is the 5th bay, where the arch rests upon a fluted corbel (north) and a corbel with Early English dog-tooth pattern (south). Then there is a short section of wall before a single eastern bay. Some authorities suggest that this could be evidence that the church was once cruciform, maybe with a central tower, and that this point was where the crossing was.

The wide **CHANCEL ARCH** also dates from the 1200s but, by contrast, the tall and handsome **TOWER ARCH** is over 200 years later.

The **FLOORS** of bricks and square pavers in the nave and aisles give the feel of antiquity, but mostly these replaced the 19th century wooden floors in 1981.

The **ROOFS**, although not old or grand as many in Suffolk, show very worthy craftsmanship. The nave has an arch-braced cambered tiebeam roof which was renewed in 1866 in the style of its decayed 1400s predecessor, including the eastern bay, which is embellished with little ribs and bosses to form a canopy of honour over the Rood beneath it. The chancel received its scissor-beam roof (as was used in the 1300s) in 1864. Some timbers in the simple lean-to roof of the north aisle may well date from the 1600s. The timbers of the south aisle roof are older and more gnarled. They are supported by king-posts rising from mediaeval tiebeams and faint traces of the simple mediaeval floral-designs which once adorned them can be seen on the eastern tiebeam.

Seating

The nave and aisles are equipped with an amazing variety of **BENCHES**. Most of these are 15th century; a few are from 1866, and some of these with 15th century parts or poppyheads carefully grafted onto them. The two main blocks in the nave are Mendlesham's own mediaeval benches, with a variety of tracery designs embellishing their carved ends, which terminate in three-lobed poppyheads. Sadly most of the carved figures on their armrests have decayed or disappeared, mainly because of centuries of wear and tear. But to see the quality of what was once here, enjoy the two intriguing creatures each end of the rear bench of the northern block (level with the entrance). The benches to the west of these are a real mixture. The eastern one of the nave north block has a 1600s poppyhead on one end and a little seated figure on the other (two further 1600s ends adorn a bench in the western part of the north aisle).

The north aisle benches, east of the entrance are 15th century but are smaller and of a different design. These were brought from Rishangles in 1976. In the south aisle. The benches with traceried ends are Mendlesham's and those with plain ends are from Rishangles.. Identifying these is further complicated because salvageable woodwork from badly-decayed Southolt benches has been skilfully used to restore decaying Rishangles benches, to make them usable!

LIVING HISTORY – EXQUISITE CRAFTSMANSHIP - MEMORIES OF REAL PEOPLE – AND THE CREATION OF SOMETHING BEAUTIFUL FOR A HOLY PLACE – are all enshrined in the wealth of fascinating things to be discovered in St Mary's. These would need a very thick book to do them full justice, but hopefully the following brief notes will point you to some of them.

Towards the west end

Our visitors may like to take advantage of the 'facility' installed in the **TOWER BASE** and also appreciate the tremendous thickness (4 ¾ feet) of the tower wall, seen in the west doorway. A doorway on the north side leads to the lower staircase of 42 steps, giving access to the ringing gallery and clock-chamber. In the ringing-gallery wall are pieces of ancient stone, including one with traces of moulding. Three wooden plaques on the south wall commemorate Mendlesham ringers - *Arthur Clements* rang here for 50+ years and a muffled peal was rung on the evening of his funeral in 1930, *W and C Williams*, and *Archibald (Gunner) Godfree*, whose 'hard work, willpower and determination' in collecting newspapers and bags from farmers, raised more than half the cost (£427) of the new treble bell 'and so saw his dream realized'. The clock was made in 1886 by J Smith & Sons, of Midland Street, Derby and the walls of its chamber are punctuated by the put-log holes, where the mediaeval builders placed their wooden scaffold-poles as the tower gradually rose.

A much narrower newel-staircase of 46 steps rises in the south-east corner to the bell-chamber and tower roof. Internally the upper section of the staircase-vice is built of Tudor brick, which also lines the splays of the belfry windows.

Mendlesham's six **BELLS** (considered to be one of the finest six-bell rings in East Anglia) hang in a massive timber bell-frame, made up of sections added periodically over 600 years. The treble bell was cast in 1965 at John Taylor's Loughborough bell-foundry. The 2nd, originally by William Brend of Norwich, made in 1612, was recast at the Whitechapel bell-foundry in 1897. The 3rd and 4th bells, by Brasyer of Norwich, are the originals – cast for the new tower probably in the 1490s. Also recast at Whitechapel in 1897 was the 5th bell, originally by John Darbie of Ipswich in 1612. The tenor bell (weighing 15cwt) was cast in 1573 by Stephen Tonni at Bury St Edmunds.

The handsome Classical **TOWER SCREEN**, designed by AB Whittingham of Norwich and made by Frederick Tibbenham Ltd of Turret Lane Ipswich in 1935, was given in memory of the *Revd Edmund Richard Manwaring-White*, vicar here from 1910-32. To the right of it is the **AUMBRY FOR THE HOLY OILS** with a Classical surround designed by Jack Penton of Thorpe Morieux and made by Barry Chester of Ixworth in 1985, in memory of *Irene Ruth Bennett +1980*. Further north is the wooden **INCORPORATED CHURCH BUILDING SOCIETY NOTICE** of their grant of £15 towards the 1866 restoration on condition that 259 seats should be free of pew rents for the accommodation of the poor. Jack Penton, whose work adorns several Suffolk churches, also designed the attractive wrought-iron **LIGHT FITTINGS** on the walls, which were made in

1986.

Provision for transporting coffins at Funerals was well catered for at Mendlesham. Here we have not only an **ADULT HAND-CARRIED BIER**, but also a smaller and rather rare **CHILD'S BIER**, both of which are believed to date from c.1800. A later **BIER ON WHEELS** (purchased for £19 in 1922) may be seen near the vestry entrance.

The **HEADSTONE** of George Wood (+1740), which was rescued from the churchyard, rests behind the bookstall near the entrance. The small doorway to the porch's upper chamber (and armoury) has its original sturdy **MEDIAEVAL DOOR**. This chamber has been used to store the parish armour since 1593 and its upper door (which is at least 100 years older) is bound with iron bands and has two sturdy locks. Its walls are lined with stout timber and its window-splays are fortified with iron bars. It is said to be the most complete armoury in any English parish church. *The armoury is occasionally open to the public and there is a comprehensive booklet describing in detail the collection of armour here and other items displayed in this tiny museum of church and village life.* Also housed in this room are six chests, of which two, dating from the 1400s, may well have been placed here when the porch was built because getting them up or down the staircase is a physical impossibility. Also displayed here is a 'Baskett's' or 'Vinegar' Bible – an edition printed in 1716-17 at Oxford by John Baskett. It is famous less for its high quality as a printed book than for the glaring misprint of the page-top headline in St Luke, chapter 20, announcing 'The Parable of the Vinegar' instead of 'the Vineyard'. Small panes of glass, salvaged from the clerestory windows following damage by a hailstorm in 1947 and now displayed here, are engraved with the names of glaziers who installed them in the 18th and 19th centuries and the relevant dates (including 1783, 1800, 1808 and several for 1849). A beautiful lithograph by James Scales shows the exterior of the church from the south. Two 15th century bench-ends from Rishangles church are stored here also some small pieces of 17th century panelling from the old reading-desk.

At the west end of the south aisle are the **WORKINGS OF THE OLD TOWER CLOCK**, dating from the early 1700s and removed when the present clock was installed in 1886. Also here is the **CHIMING BARREL** which, according to an 1874 parish magazine, 'in days of yore discoursed as much sweet music as could be beaten out of five bells, has now been dumb for many a year; its revolutions having been brought to an untimely end by the stupid loyalty of an old parishioner, who in vain expectation of getting it to play the National Anthem, tinkered at it so incessantly that it was finally done to death' On the wall behind, above a stone **PLAQUE** in memory of Thomas Bacon's wife Amy (+1769), is the brass **CHARITY PLAQUE**, recording 'Houses and Land given in Charity to the Parish Church of Mendlesham in the County of Suffolk. Taken June 25 1807'. It records five bequests by generous people from 1473 onwards, engraved in capital letters and interestingly the guidelines used are also cut into the brass!

The **ORGAN** is a single manual and pedal instrument, with 10 speaking stops. The instrument, by Nicholson of Worcester, was brought from Worple Road Methodist Church Wimbledon in 1983 and rebuilt in Mendlesham's mid-19th century organ case by Bishop & Son.

The **VESTRY** area was moved here from the east end of this aisle in 1981 under the supervision of Peter Cleverly of Brockford, who designed its northern screen. The eastern screen was made to Ewan Christian's designs in 1866 for the old vestry.

The small 17th century **CHEST** (with only a single lock and probably originally made for secular use) was brought here from Southolt church. (*MENDLESHAM'S OWN PARISH CHESTS, WHICH ARE OF GREAT INTEREST, ARE KEPT IN THE ARMOURY*).

Dominating the western end of the nave (and placed here, near the entrances, to symbolise entry into the Family of the Church through Holy Baptism), is the **FONT**, where Mendlesham babes (and older people) have been baptised for maybe 600 years. Its plain sides were re-cut in 1866. The font **COVER** which crowns it is one of finest of its period in East Anglia. Here in 1630 the Mendlesham woodcarver, John Turner, created a tour-de-force – like a two-tiered wedding-cake, with beautifully turned wooden pillars and an array of spiky finials. Amazingly this was restored to its rightful position in 1908, having been consigned to the tower clock chamber for 50 or so years.

The South Porch

This is now the **HOLY CROSS CHAPEL**, which was created in 1981 under the supervision of Peter Cleverly, who designed the outer doors (in memory of *May Thorpe*) to form a backcloth for the **ALTAR** (in memory of *Kenneth Charles Gray*) and also to be openable if necessary. In two display cases (one in memory of *Dennis Ward, +1991*) are two **CHANTRY BOOKS**, (one for the parish and the other for the 34th Bomber Group) containing the names of many departed people who are remembered and prayed for here.

Fixed to the side walls are dramatic and vibrant **PAINTINGS** by Cyril Fradan (1928-97) a South African artist, who came to London in 1960 and moved to Thailand in 1986. The eastern scenes show St Helena holding out the Cross of Christ and facing a resurrected body responding to it. Opposite we see St Helena finding the true Cross and her son, the Emperor Constantine having the dream that it was by the Cross that he would conquer. Parts of the four scenes dramatically protrude out of their frames into the window spaces. The paintings were given in memory of *Helena Margaret Cleverly – wife of the architect, Peter Cleverly*.

All this is set beneath what must be the finest **ROOF** in the church – work of the late 1400s in oak, rising from wall-posts which rest upon carved angels. The roof shelters the church's noble **SOUTH DOORWAY** – work of the 1200s and identical to (but a little less worn than) its northern counterpart. In the stonework of the doorways western side are faint traces of a **MASS-DIAL**, which enabled people to calculate when to begin services before the days of clocks (and in this case long before the porch was built). The two rustic 17th century **BENCHES** were in the porch at Southolt church.

The South Aisle

On the wall of this aisle are the **ROYAL ARMS** of King George III, which came from Southolt church in 1978 and (as a note on the back tells us) were restored and repainted in 1907. The **BRASS OF MARGARET ARMIGER**, also came from Southolt. The figure of Robert, her husband, who died in 1585, is missing and there is no mention of her death on the inscription. The lozenge-shaped **HATCHMENT** (further east) has the arms of the Cresacre (Yorkshire) and Marshall (Derbyshire) families and has been dated c.1775-1825. It was purchased by the Revd ER Manwaring-White, who brought it with him when he moved from Yorkshire to Mendlesham in 1910. Hatchments were displayed outside the home of a deceased person for a period of time, before being hung in their parish church. The person represented here has ended up a long way from home!

The east end of this aisle was transformed in 1981 with the creation, to the designs of Peter Cleverly, of the

BLESSED SACRAMENT CHAPEL. Before then this area was the vestry, with a Victorian altar and tabernacle in front of it. There was a chapel here in mediaeval times and so the windowsill has been lowered to form **SEDILIA**, where the officiating ministers could sit and nearby is a trefoil-headed **PISCINA** recess, over the drain into which the disposable water used at the Masses celebrated here could be poured.

Now part of the **COMMUNION RAIL** made for the sanctuary in 1864 has been re-used here and a massive **ALTAR** has been built, incorporating mediaeval stonework found in and around the church and topped with the mediaeval **MENSA SLAB**, which was discarded by Law in the 1540s and buried in the church floor to the west of the font. The little **RELIQUARY RECESS** set into the west face of the altar contains relics of SS Vincent, and Victorinus (who were put to death for their faith in the 300s AD). In the east wall, beneath the window and hidden by a colourful veil, is the **AUMBRY**, in which the Blessed Sacrament (some of the bread consecrated at Mass) is reverently and securely kept, so that it can be taken to the sick and to others who need it and so that this corner of St Mary's can be a place for thought and prayer, in the nearness of Jesus, who is very specially present here.

The Lady Chapel

The corresponding chapel on the north side was also in use as such in mediaeval times and its tiny quatrefoil (four-lobed) **PISCINA DRAIN** is set into the lowered cill of the north window. A beautiful **NICHE**, with worn but exquisite 15th century stonecarving, occupies the lower part of the east window's centre. From her place beneath its canopy, in a statue given in 1965, **MARY, THE MOTHER OF OUR LORD**, holds out her Son for us to see and to respond to. The hood-mould framing the window's arch rests upon two **CORBEL HEADS** carved in the 1400s.

The beautiful Elizabethan **COMMUNION TABLE** was made c.1600 and was the church's high altar until it was moved here in 1921, when the chapel was equipped with the 1600s style **COMMUNION RAILS**. The oak **PANELLING** behind the altar (given by the Le Gryns family and displaying their coat of arms) was made by H & K Mabbitt of Colchester in 1965 to match their earlier panelling behind the high altar. In 1966 two silvered **CANDLESTICKS** and a cross were made for this altar by Diadem Craft of Clerkenwell Road, London in memory of *John Collins, +1959 and Arthur Syrett, +1955*.

This also serves as a War Memorial and Peace Chapel and it was set up as such in 1920, when the memorial glass (see description later) was installed in the **EAST WINDOW** and the painted wooden **WAR MEMORIAL PLAQUE** with the names of the Fallen in World War 1 was fixed near the entrance. This fine piece of craftsmanship has fleurons studding its borders and the arms of the diocese at the top. Names of World War 2 dead were added in 1947 and one Korean War victim, were added later. The **BRITISH LEGION STANDARD** was placed in the chapel in 1966.

To the right of the east window is the late 1400s **ENTRANCE TO THE ROOD-LOFT STAIRCASE** (with much graffiti in its arch – mostly initials and dates, including 'RG' who immortalised himself in 1807). The upper entrance may be seen higher up, on the nave side. (Faint traces of much earlier and more interesting graffiti may be seen in some of the arcade pillars and we look forward to discovering more about this).

The East end of the Nave

The **PULPIT**, made in 1631 by Mendlesham's John Turner, was reduced in height and given its stone base and

steps in 1866. Nevertheless it is a beautiful piece of woodcarving, with its blank arches and other motifs of the period.

In the floor nearby is the **BRASS OF SIR JOHN KNYVET**. The slab was raised from the floor and moved to its present position in 1981. He was Lord of the Manor of Mendlesham, having inherited it by marrying Joan, the daughter of Sir John Botetourt, who held the Manor. Sir John's effigy (4ft 8ins long) is dressed in Lancastrian period armour, with his fine forked beard (unusually) showing outside it. His feet rest upon a lion and his head upon his dragons-head crest. The one remaining shield has the arms of Weldon impaling Bassett – for Eleanor Bassett, Sir John's mother.

A small plaque on the north side of the chancel-arch commemorates the gift of the 15 **STATIONS OF THE CROSS** in memory of *Valerie Louise Keeble (+1982)*. These are made of 'wood' finished glass-fibre and were placed in 1986 around the aisle walls. They trace our Lord's final journey from his condemnation to death to his burial, with the final scene proclaiming his resurrection from the dead.

On the north wall is the **IKON** of Our Lady and her Child, entitled 'Mother of the Passion'. This was given to the church by Fr Elias Jones (a Deacon in the Orthodox Church) in 1985.

The focal-point of the nave is the **PARISH ALTAR**, where the Parish Mass takes place. This was designed by Jack Penton and made by Barrie Chester in 1983. Into its top is set the little stone mensa from the East End church of St Augustine Haggerston – a church much loved and known as a centre of Anglo-Catholic worship and witness, particularly during the remarkable ministry there (from 1925-54) of Fr HA Wilson. A set of four Requiem candlesticks and a set of black vestments in use here also came from St Augustine's.

The **ROOD GROUP** (Christ crucified, and flanked by his Mother and St John), high above the chancel arch was purchased in 1981 and is thought to have been made for a convent. It was given in memory of *William Fletcher (+1933) and Mary (+1961)*.

In mediaeval times the Rood proclaimed to the congregation the central fact of the Christian Faith, but the Reformers in the 1540s destroyed them, and the rood-loft, which provided a walkway to tend the candles burning before the Rood and to veil it during Lent. To see what all this would have looked like, visit Eye church where, in 1925, Sir Ninian Comper designed a new loft and rood above the mediaeval rood-screen. At Mendlesham the screen and loft have long gone – only the rood-loft staircase remains, also evidence in the stonework of the chancel arch and the nearest arcade responds, which are cut away, to show where parts of the rood complex and parclose screens for the chapels fitted.

The Chancel

Long, light and intimate, with green trees visible through the clear glass of its east window, this chancel has great atmosphere; its open scissor-beam **ROOF** and **CHOIR STALLS**, with traceried fronts to their book-rests, date from Ewan Christian's restoration of 1864. Filling the priest's doorway is Mendlesham's **SHRINE OF OUR LADY OF WALSINGHAM**, linking this church with the North Norfolk village which was a great centre of pilgrimage from 1061, when the Lady of the Manor had a vision of the Virgin Mary until 1538, when the Shrine was destroyed. Since 1922 pilgrims have again flocked to Walsingham, where many people (including Mendlesham folk) have found God to be very real to them in this holy and vibrant place. The statue was given in 1983, in memory of *Walter Sanders*. It is the work of the eminent wood-carver, Anton Wagner of

Oberammergau and Walsingham.

The **COMMUNION RAIL** was made in the late 1600s for Southolt church and was installed here in 1979.

The **HIGH ALTAR**, adorned with its frontals, makes a colourful focal-point in the church. Forming a backcloth for it is the tasteful **OAK PANELLING** (crowned with the 'Maria' emblem picked out in gold), which lines the east wall. On the north side is a coat of arms and inscription commemorating *James Clapham Farmborough, +1958 and his wife, Edith, +1960* and on the south side *Percy Payne, +1946 and his wife, Ella, +1952*, are commemorated. The panelling was installed in 1963 and is the work of H and K Mabbitt of Colchester.

The great five-light **EAST WINDOW** is in the Perpendicular style of the 1400s, but each side of it are circular shafts (with shaft-rings half-way up) which date from the 1200s and were part of an earlier window - maybe an Early English triple-lancet window.

The southern windowsill is lowered to form **SEDILIA**, providing seating for the Celebrant, Deacon and Subdeacon, during the mediaeval High Mass. Unusually there is no piscina visible – there most certainly was one and maybe it is hidden in the wall nearby, waiting to be discovered.

In the sanctuary is a modern replica of a famous **MENDLESHAM CHAIR**. These distinctive yew or fruit-wood Windsor chairs were made in Mendlesham, initially by the Day family, between 1780 and 1820. The two original chairs belonging to the church were unfortunately stolen, but this modern replacement is beautifully and authentically made.

Stained Glass

Scenes in stained glass provided a wealth of visual-aids by which to teach the Faith; it also gave the finest artists and glassmakers to exercise their skills in adorning the House of God. The Puritans in the 1640s regarded the mediaeval scenes as 'superstitious images' and the glass was wantonly destroyed in most of our churches, including here at St Mary's.

A few fragments of Mendlesham's remaining **MEDIAEVAL GLASS** have been collected together in the tracery of the **south aisle east window** and in the **north aisle west window**. In the right-hand tracery light of the **north aisle east window**, however, is a complete 15th century figure of St John the Evangelist, with his emblem of a chalice with a demon emerging in one hand and a martyr's palm in the other, set beneath a little vaulted canopy. This panel was discovered when the 1920 glass was put in, having been hidden for maybe 300 years.

In the north aisle windows may be seen beautiful 15th century glass from other churches.

The **window east of the porch** has six panels which were in the tracery of the chancel windows of Southolt church. Again, these are made up of jumbled fragments, but these are easier to see and the keen eye will detect parts of human figures, little hands, angels' feathers, a lion's face, feet, inscriptions, etc.

In the **three-light north window** is a rectangular panel filled with a jig-saw of mediaeval glass fragments from Rishangles church. Here may be seen leafy vine-trail borders, a hand holding a book, a turreted gateway and a splendid horse, with the hands of its rider. Above it is a quatrefoil (four-lobed) panel, with the 'HIS' emblem of our Lord's name set in foliage designs.

19th AND 20th CENTURY GLASS was also designed to teach, and to be colourful and beautiful, as is seen in the following windows:-

Chancel, south-east – This window, installed in 1873, shows Jesus the Good Shepherd, with the Alpha and Omega letters (the first and last in the Greek alphabet) and the ‘IHS’ emblem of our Lord’s name in the tracery.

Chancel, south-west – ‘The Good Physician’ – a scene showing Jesus the healer, with two angels with a scroll in the tracery. A brass plaque in the sill records that this glass, by Josef Mayer & Co of Munich, was placed here in 1912 in memory of *Dr William Cuthbert +1890, his son William(also a Doctor) +1911, and his daughter, Mary Evelyn Marwaring White +1911.*

Lady Chapel, east window – Installed in 1920 as part of Mendlesham’s tribute to those who died in World War 1, the central panel shows the crucified Christ looking down upon a suffering soldier. Looking in on the scene from the side lights are St Michael the Archangel and St George, England’s Patron Saint. Beneath them are the badges of the three Armed Forces and of the Suffolk Regiment. The tracery lights contain an angel, the text ‘Surely he hath borne our griefs’ the Suffolk Saints – Edmund and Felix – and the 15th century figure of St John (see above). This glass is by the versatile Thomas Figgis Curtis of the firm of Ward & Hughes, which he designed and made four years before his death in 1924.

Blessed Sacrament Chapel, east window – The small roundel, showing the dove of the Holy Spirit, was placed here when the chapel was restored in 1981.

Monumental Inscriptions

Many of the fittings in St Mary’s have been given in memory of people who have been associated with it and these have been mentioned earlier, as has Mendlesham’s finest monument – Sir John Knyvet’s brass. On the walls and in the floors of the church are several memorial inscriptions to people of the past who have been part of this church and parish.

In the floors are various **BURIAL-SLABS** – including a few worn mediaeval ones with no clues as to whom they commemorate, two slabs with brass inscriptions, and several ledger-slabs. Most of the ledger-slabs are of black marble and have beautifully carved coats of arms. These memorials commemorate:-

Nave: east – west –

1. *John Sheppard, +1747*
2. *Ann Sheppard (wife of Edmund and daughter of Sir John Coell), +1679*
3. *The Revd John Corbould, +1733.* He was rector of Kettlebaston and was also curate here. Also commemorated are his wife *Mary, +1760*, his son *George, +1766*, George’s daughter *Mary, +1759* and John’s daughter *Mary, +1763*, whose husband, the Revd Richard Chilton, was vicar here.
4. *Frances Chilton, +1836.* Her husband was the Revd Jacob Chilton, who was rector of Eyke 1776 until his death in 1828 and was also vicar of Mendlesham from 1776-87.
5. Brass inscription to *Barnaby Barker (Jr), +1629.*

6. *Edward Sheppard, +1818* and his son *John Sheppard, +1830*.

North Aisle: east – west –

1. *The Revd Charles Gibson, +1700*. He was vicar here. Also his wife *Mary, +1723* and their daughter, *Audrey Wace, +1760*

2. *Edmund Sheppard, +1708*

3. *Edmund Sheppard (Sr), +1676*

4. *Dorothy, daughter of William Collard and wife of Edmund Sheppard, +1692* *Edwin Gregory*

5. Brass inscription to *Barnaby Barker (Sr), +1617*

South Aisle

Slab marking the vault of *the Revd Richard Corbould Chilton*, who was vicar here from 1878 – 1819.

The following **PLAQUES ON THE WALLS** commemorate:-

1. *Dr William Cuthbert MRCSL, +1858*. He was the local doctor, who ran ‘a successful practice of more than 50 years’ here. (Chancel, south).

2. *The Revd Richard Corbould Chilton, vicar here 1787 until +1816*. This memorial, in the shape of a sarcophagus, is the work of the renowned London monumental mason, Charles Regnart, who was responsible for over 40 high-quality church monuments throughout England. (Chancel, south).

3. *The Revd Edward Foyle Randolph, +1909* – a trefoil-headed arch, with marble shafts. (Chancel, south).

4. *Mrs Ann Marriott, +1853*. She was the widow of the Revd Charles Marriott, rector of Broadwey Dorset and Fellow of Caius College Cambridge. Her plaque, topped by an urn, is the work of Samuel Manning of London. (Chancel, north).

5. *Mary Ann Gissing, +15 April 1874, aged 35, Henry Herbert Gissing, +25 May 1874, aged 6 weeks and Bertha Edith Gissing, +1875*. Mary died at sea off Tasmania, little Henry died at Sydney, Australia and Bertha died at sea off Dover and is interred here in the family vault. (North aisle, near entrance to the Lady Chapel).

Beneath is a framed photograph of the grave in the Sailors’ Cemetery at Pootung, Shanghai of *George Edwin Gregory Gissing, +1863, aged 19*. He was born in 1844 and was baptised here in 1851; he served on the HMS ‘Havelock’, an Indian paddle gunboat, launched in 1857.

6. Brass plaque to *Sophia Ottewill +1905*, which was ‘Erected by the Rt Hon Sir Frederick Milner Bart, MP, in remembrance of many years faithful service’. Sir Frederick, of Nun Appleton, Yorkshire, was the father of Sir William Milner, architect, who gave the land for and helped to design the Anglican Shrine Church of Our Lady of Walsingham and who was one of the Shrine’s first Guardians. (South aisle).

SOME OF OUR CLERGY

The names of vicars of Mendlesham from 1085 are known and may be seen on the board in the porch. Most of these survive just as recorded names, until we get to the 1800s, when we are able to discover more about these

characters who not only served, but also influenced the life of this parish and its parish church. They include:-

1834-61 - Henry Thomas DAY, LI D. Dr Day was a scholar and poet, whose publications included *Agarsife and Other Poems*, 'Ode to Liberation of Abd-el-Kadar' and a series of pamphlets in favour of the revision of the Authorised Version of the Bible. His book of 'Sermons at Mendlesham' was published in 1835. He died in September 1861, aged 62.

1861-77 – Edmund Roger Manwaring WHITE. Son of Edmund, of York Terrace, London, and admitted to Lincoln's Inn in 1850, he was priested in 1853 and served curacies at Debenham and Woolverstone before coming to Mendlesham. He left to be vicar of Ryarsh, in Kent having exchanged livings with his successor here.

1877-92 – Henry Welsford SNELL. Curate at Windermere and then vicar of Ryarsh, which he exchanged with the Revd ERM White. Exchanging livings was common practice in those days, when it was often difficult for clergy to move to another diocese. He contracted another exchange in 1892 – to All Saints Blackheath, where he remained until his retirement in 1907, a year before his death.

1892-1909 – Edward Foyle RANDOLPH. Curate at St Nicholas Bristol, rector of Fifield, then of Kimpton (Hants), then of All Saints Blackheath. He was buried at Mendlesham in July 1909.

1910-32 – Edmund Richard MANWARING-WHITE. He was the eldest son of the Revd ERM White (former vicar and patron of the living) and adopted the surname 'Manwaring-White' in 1880. He was curate at St Luke's Leicester, vicar of Eastofts, then of Acaster Selby with Appleton Roebuck (Yorks). His wife, Evelyn Marion, was the daughter of the Mendlesham doctor, William Cuthbert MRCS. A Prayer Book Catholic and a member of the English Church Union, he beautified the interior of the church, especially the Lady Chapel. He was also known for his love of the countryside and for farming his glebe-land. He died on 30th April 1932, aged 77 and his funeral (following an overnight watch before his coffin in church) was conducted by the Revd PTE Wareham, Rural Dean, who was to be his successor here. The congregation heard of this priest, who was 'esteemed for his quiet tact', that 'whilst he joyed in being one of the old Tractarians, he was beloved by adherents of all schools of thought, including Nonconformists'. After his death the patronage of the living was transferred from his family to the Anglo-Catholic Society for the Maintenance of the Faith.

1932-54 – Percy Thomas Ellwood WAREHAM. Canon Wareham served curacies at the Anglo-Catholic strongholds of St Agnes Kennington Park and Stanford (Norfolk), before his 12 years as vicar of Westhorpe, where he beautified its fascinating church. He was an amateur woodcarver, carpenter and builder, who undertook several minor repairs to the stonework, floors, windows, etc. in the church himself. He retired to Ipswich.

1954-55 – Herebert Malcolm PEARCE. Curate at St Michael Oxford, Kirkley (Lowestoft) and St Hilda Crofton Park, Lewisham, then vicar of Foxearth (Essex) from 1946-54. After his very brief period at Mendlesham he returned to Essex, to be rector of Gestingthorpe, before moving to St Chad's Manningham, Bradford and then to Salt, in Staffordshire.

1955-57 – Frederick SHAW. After five years ministry in Canada, he was curate at St Ambrose Bournemouth and at Illingworth (Yorks), before becoming vicar of Linthwaite, Horbury and Mendlesham, from whence he retired to Costessey, Norfolk.

1957-59 – Albert Genison HOUSEAGO. Before coming to Mendlesham, Fr Houseago had served curacies at

Warrington and at St John Tue Brook Liverpool and from 1949 had been a member of the Society of Divine Compassion at Plaistow. Much to the sadness of many of his parishioners, he resigned and was received into the Church of Rome.

1959-74 – James Bernard JOLLEY. Fr Jolley came to Mendlesham from Yorkshire, where he had been curate at Castleford, then parish priest at Lindwood and at Cornholme. His ministry here was ended by his untimely death.

1974 - Philip Thomas GRAY. Fr Philip, a native of Braintree, who learned the Catholic Faith at nearby Black Notley church, taught at Palmers School Grays before studying for the priesthood at Chichester Theological College. He came to Mendlesham having assistant curate at St Clement's Leigh-on-Sea, Essex and, after over 40 years, is the longest-serving parish priest currently ministering in a Suffolk parish. An acknowledged church-expert and a passionate campaigner for their preservation and proper use, St Mary's has been transformed during his time here and has been enriched with treasures from closed churches and with tasteful modern craftsmanship. The worship and witness has also been enriched over the years, making Medlesham known far and wide as a stronghold of Catholic Faith and practice in the diocese.

It has been a tremendous pleasure to research and write about one of Suffolk's most glorious churches, which is a treasure-house of beautiful things from many periods and really is a 'church-crawler's dream'! Always open and welcoming to its many visitors and pilgrims, St Mary's is much used and much prayed-in and its devotional and very special atmosphere has a way of bringing people gently to their knees. I am grateful for the welcome that I always receive from its Church family and for the privilege of compiling this little History and Guide.

Fr Philip and his wife Anne have given me much kindness, hospitality, encouragement and fun. He is no mean authority on our lovely churches and especially his own, and is probably far more qualified than I to write about it. I am also grateful to George Pipe, John Taylor, Simon Pulham, Dr John Blatchly and the late Peter Northeast for their expertise and to the staff of the Suffolk Record Office for the use of material in their care.

Roy Tricker

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