

History of All Saints Church, Sudbourne



Amanda Bettinson

The Church

The Church sits in almost isolated splendor just outside the present village of Sudbourne. The building is listed in the Domesday Book but the Saxon church that stood here was probably a wood or wattle building. The present church was built in stone in the 12th century and there is a Norman arch above a blocked doorway in the south wall, only visible from the outside. The tower appears to have been added in the first half of the 14th century. In 1621 the church is recorded as having a thatched roof and in 1676 the church was rebuilt after a fire. A watercolour of the church in early 1800s shows that the tower then had a short pyramid cap. The church was completely restored in 1878-9, paid for by Sir Richard Wallace of Sudbourne Hall. The architect was Frederick Barnes, the contractor R S Smith and the stonemason Mr. Frewer all of Ipswich. At this time the tower received a new roof and a lead-covered spirelet (known as a Hertfordshire spike).



Tim Fargher

The south porch is now blocked and is used as the vestry, and the main entrance to the Church is through the north porch. Both have a pair of shields in the spandrels, one of passion symbols, the other of the Holy Trinity. The Trinity symbol is to the east in both cases. At the time of the 1879 restoration, the interior was completely refurbished, with new benches and Minton tiles throughout.

In the sanctuary there is a large monument to Sir Michael Stanhope, erected by himself before he died in 1621, having bought the Sudbourne Estate in 1600. According to the inscription he sat at the feet of Elizabeth I for twenty years. In fact, he was a Privy Councilor, both to her and to James I. Now he kneels through all eternity in Sudbourne Church. Below him is his wife all in black and two of their three daughters Jane and Elizabeth. The two daughters sadly have been reduced to stumps.

The Hatchments

There is an impressive collection of funeral hatchments which have been restored with a Heritage Lottery Grant (2011). Four hatchments hanging on the west wall are for members of the Devereux family. The oldest is for Leicester Devereux the 6th Viscount Hereford who died in 1676.

His first wife was Elizabeth Withypole the heiress who inherited the Sudbourne Estate from her mother (Sir Michael Stanhope's daughter) and the Christchurch Mansion Estate in Ipswich from her father, Sir William Withypole. Hatchments also hang for Leicester's youngest daughter Anne

Devereux (by his second marriage) who died we think about 1728, her husband Leicester Martin 1732 and Pryce Devereux, 10th Viscount Hereford 1748, who first married Anne and Leicester's daughter Elizabeth. The two grand hatchments hanging on the north wall are for the Seymour-Conway family, the 2nd and 3rd Marquess of Hertford, who bought the estate after the death of the 10th Viscount Hereford. The heir of the 4th Marquess was Sir Richard Wallace (his illegitimate son) and he in turn bequeathed to the state a considerable art collection, which today is known as 'The Wallace Collection'. Wallace also donated the organ at the time of the restoration in 1879 and put in the east window in memory of his grandmother, Maria 3rd Marchioness of Hertford, who brought him up in Paris. They all have a fascinating history of interweaving marriages and political careers which is explained in much more detail in the Church brochure.



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The Churchyard

In the churchyard, which is a wildlife haven, are many old gravestones. One of the best inscriptions is to Matthew Groom, who departed this life in 1769, at the age of 49. It reads in part:

*The Boreas Blasts Neptunes Waves have tost me to and fro.
Yet spite of both by God decreed I Harbour here below,
Where I do now my Anchor lay with many of our Fleet.
Yet once again I must set Sail our Admiral Christ to meet.*

The Church Mission

The church provides a consecrated and peaceful place where banns are read, couples are married, children christened, funerals are conducted and the dead buried.

It is here that the cycle of sacramental life is celebrated throughout the calendar of the Christian year – Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Holy Week, Good Friday, Easter, Trinity and Harvest Festival. We hold a service of worship each week and also make our pews, seating over 120 people, available for the community on other occasions which include concerts and lectures.

We also offer an understanding and non judgemental private ear for anyone who feels they need it. If you would like to speak in private to the Rector or one of the Elders or find out how All Saints can help you please call 01394 450 336.

Conducted Tours

Visitors are more than welcome to this old and tranquil Church with over 1000 years of intriguing history and architecture. If you would like to arrange a group visit for a conducted tour of the Church and hatchments please contact Amanda Bettinson on 01394 450 863 who will be happy to help.