

History of Holy Trinity

We hope the following notes help visitors appreciate the history of our church. A more complete guide is available if you would like more information (please contact the church wardens accordingly).

Notes for Visitors



This Church is one of the three oldest in Kent, having been founded within a few years of the coming of St. Augustine in 597. The original building extended from the present chancel arch to the Tower arch and from the north wall, much of which is original, the width of the present nave.

It sits on traditionally religious ground. The large stone outside the front porch is said to be a pagan alter-stone. A Roman villa also stood near the site. The original church includes in its walls a high proportion of roman tiles from the villa ruins.

The records of Ely mention that 'Queen Sexburga, Abbess of Minster in Sheppey, left her life at the Doors of Mylton Church' in 680. *<St. Sexbergha, dowager Queen of Kent, was first Abbess of Minster-in-Sheppey (and now co-patroness of the Abbey Church there), second Abbess (after her sister Etheldreda) of Ely. The porch and doors would have stood where the tower now is, with a small room above it, reached by rope ladder, for the priest. The door high on the west wall, which now looks out from the ringing chamber, enabled him to keep an eye on the church.>*



The original dedication is unknown - the name Holy Trinity could not predate the founding of Trinity Sunday by Pope Gregory IV in 828. In 1052 Earl Godwin, father of King Harold of Battle of Hastings fame, sacked the Royal Town of Milton during his revolt against Edward the Confessor and badly damaged the Church. Upon its repair the church walls were heightened and a chancel and south transept added. The present name of the church may well have been given at the re-dedication of the restored building, probably by Archbishop Lanfranc after the Norman Conquest. The same archbishop made the church the centre of an extensive Deanery in 1070.

The Porch

The Porch has a fine old chessboard pattern gate *<presently removed and stored inside the church>* and an oak kingpost roof, both original (c.1450). On the right of the Church door is a Consecration cross (another is on the West door entrance).



The South Aisle

On the right after entering the church is a holy water stoop.



Further east on the same wall is the entrance to a rood loft, its door partly destroyed by a modern window. High on the wall is the rood doorway, with the other end of the Rood Arch opposite. *<A rood loft was a raised platform with a rood (crucifix) in the middle - where the gospel was read for greater ease of hearing in days before amplifier systems.>*



Below the door is a small window (often found in the south wall of a church) from which a bell was rung at the Sanctus and Consecration so that those working in the fields might pause for prayer at the focal points of the Mass within.

Further east is a priest's door providing direct access to the chancel.

The organ was made by Bevington & Sons, one of the leading firms of the period, in about 1870. Its brilliant tone is reminiscent of an 18th rather than 19th century instrument. *<The organ is now in retirement, due partly to maintenance costs, being replaced by an electric organ.>*



The Norwood Chapel



The Norwood Chapel was originally built in the early 1400s as a Chantry chapel for the de Northwode family *<where requiem masses were said for the souls of deceased Norwoods>*. Its dedication, if any, is unknown.

It was restored by the Mothers' Union in 1940 with a steeper pitch to the roof (the old beam supports may be seen on the wall). The incorrect main window was put in during the mid 19th century to replace one blown out in a gale.

The alter rails, once thought to be Queen Anne, have recently been identified by an expert as Tudor.

The light on the north wall of this sanctuary is over the aumbry where the sacrament of Holy Communion is reserved for the Sick.

There is a good Decorated sedilia with Purbeck marble shafts. The sedilia left arch contains fragments of a brass to Thomas Ayleff *<now unfortunately missing>* and his wife Margaret Ayleff, owners of Coleshall in the early 1500s; in the right arch now hangs an oak board set with brasses (original site unknown) to Sir John and Lady Norwood (c.1496) with their coat-of-arms.



On the wall tomb between the chapel and the main church is the brass of an unknown knight of the Norwood household (c.1480). The armorial bearings were pilfered in the 18th century so it is impossible to identify him.



High on the north wall of the chapel is the support which formerly held the gauntlets and jousting helm of Sir John Norton, High Sheriff of Kent and brother-in-law of Sir John Norwood. The gauntlets have long since perished however the Norwood Helm is now in the Armouries of the Tower of London on extended loan from the parish. The altar tomb beneath is that of Sir John Norton. (Details of the Norwood and Norton families are on a plaque on the south wall outside the sanctuary.)

The Chancel



The East window is a recent addition, being a memorial to a parishioner killed in the South African War (1899-1901). The face of the knight in armour is said to be that of the man commemorated and the dog in the lower right section is the man's pet dog which is said to have followed him everywhere. Its description on the north wall is worth reading.



There is a piscina in the south wall of the sanctuary.



The door outside the Communion rail leads to a vestry and room above it which was once an anchorite's chapel and cell <*an anchorite was a priest who lived in the room - the 'cell' - above*>. A licence from Henry III authorising the parish to maintain an anchorite, dated 1255, is in the library of Merton College, Oxford. The piscina and mural paintings in the vestry date from his occupation, though the altar step reflects renewed use of the room as a chapel in the 19th century. The anchorite would have been walled up into his cell, living in the upper room then reached by a rope ladder and preaching through the large window there to people below, on whom he relied for gifts of food on which to survive. The existing doorway into the church would at that time have been walled in.

The Jacobean Vicar's Stall in choir (and possibly the two high-backed chairs in the Norwood sanctuary) were probably made from the wood of a former rood screen.

The Nave is much modernised with large Perpendicular style windows. The small blocked window near the Pulpit held the Easter Sepulchre in which the Reserved Sacrament was placed between Good Friday and Easter Sunday. Perhaps there was a side altar where the pulpit now stands and the Sepulchre was within its sanctuary.



There is also a Devil's Door in the north wall. A portion of plaster has been removed from the wall (opposite the Porch door) to reveal the Roman brick in herring-bone pattern of the original early 7th century church.



The Tower



The Tower is the largest in Kent and third largest in England in girth (25' square internally at the level of the Ringing Chamber with 4' thick walls). It is 78' high - nothing unusual but the highest in the area and an Ordnance Survey Reference point.

The tower was built between 1310 and 1330. *<The porch and south-west section of the church are from about the same date. The porch door, the chequerboard gate now at the back of the church and most of the woodwork in the ceiling of both nave and chancel (apart from a few obviously machine cut beams) belong to this period.>*

There are six bells, five of 1682 and one of 1934.

The Font

The 14th century font formerly stood on a dais at the west end of the Church.



Mural Paintings



The fresco of Paul before Agrippa and Bernice above the pulpit on the north wall is probably one frame of a life of St. Paul covering the entire wall, of which the others remain to be exposed. One expert describes it as being among the oldest in England. The mural was painted about the time King John was signing Magna Carta - the whole wall was whitewashed to protect the paintings from Cromwellian vandalism.

Over the Porch door is a fresco of St. Christopher; over the Vicar's Stall one of a vine; and in the Anchorite's chapel one of St. Paul. A much faded fresco of the Crucifixion in the same room is now hidden behind cupboards.

List of Vicars

A list of vicars hangs near the lectern. Prior to those named the parish was staffed by Austin (Augustinian) canons from Canterbury.



One of the Earliest Fireworks Accidents?

In the graveyard adjacent to the porch is the gravestone of Simon Gilker Junior who "was killed by means of a rocket November 5 1696". *<The Gunpowder Plot was in 1605.>*

The Vicars of Milton

As the list on the Chancel wall remarks: "It is extremely difficult to find the names of the very early vicars. Records of the early fourteenth century are very few; the list however is fairly complete from 1390."

It is probable that the church was served by Friars from St. Augustine's Abbey, Canterbury, and after 1148, by those from Faversham.

1312	Richard de Adisham	1651	Thomas Vaughan, Intruder
1351	Gerard	1652	Thomas Millar, Intruder
1390	Thomas Newman	1659	Thomas Lythull, Intruder
	John Taillour (May 18 th)		
	Richard Downemore (July 13 th)		<i>Restoration of Charles II</i>
1391	Hugh de Merleburgh		
1393	Thomas Cooke	1661	John Hunt
1402	William Radecliffe	1672	Thomas Turner
1409	John Putney	1695	William Turner
1413	John Cheyne	1711	John Smith
1429	Thomas Edyngtham	1718	Charles Hinde
1443	Thomas Neele	1751	Francis Gregory
1443	Thomas Thewenge	1764	Osmond Beauvoir
1444	Thomas Slo	1790	John Rose
1449	Peter Dyngley	1792	Henry John Todd
1497	William Petyte	1801	Edward Walsby, D.D.
1507	George Percy	1806	John Yeates
1511	Robert Woderoffe, S.T.P.	1826	William Bennett
1512	Thomas Austin (Monastery of St. Augustine suppressed)	1852	Charles Coffin
1543	Henry Browne	1862	William English
1545	John Scory, S.T.P. (later consecrated Bp. of Rochester)	1869	William Harker
1551	Richard Barkeston	1881	Robert Payne Smith
1560	Simon Clerke	1893	Edward Westall Carpenter
1570	William Clerke	1909	T.T. Lucius Morgan
1571	Hugo Smith	1909	Edwin David Bowser
1577	Peter Petters	1919	Douglas Lycett Lycett
1584	John Ingleton	1925	John Wells
1585	Richard Colfe	1936	Henry Bradburn
	Anthony Kingsmill	1945	Frank H.V. Fordham
1616	Isaac Colfe	1949	Richard A.F. Parsons
1623	Thomas Streaten	1956	Paul E. Richmond
1624	Isaac Colfe	1966	Peter J. Lloyd
	<i>Period of the Commonwealth</i>	1970	William Drury, M.A. , S.T.B.
		1997	Graham Herbert Green, BSc.
		2007	Lorne Denny