

Snetterton All Saints



Nowadays this Church seems to be a long way from the centre of the village, but its earliest features suggest it dates from the 13th century. There was another medieval Church, dedicated to St Andrew but this was pulled down during the reign of Henry VIII. It stood about 200 yards away to the north, just beyond Snetterton Hall, now the home of the World Horse Welfare. This would suggest that in medieval times, the village of Snetterton clustered around this site. Presumably it became too costly for the villagers to maintain two medieval churches, and the Parishes were consolidated in 1435.

Over the centuries All Saints has seen many ups and downs, restorations and improvements: by following its history it is possible to see many stages in the development of church architecture. There have also sad times of neglect and deterioration, not to mention the attention of a band of determined jackdaws that in recent year chose the church as their preferred residence. Extensive restoration work in 2018/19 largely funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund has ensured that All Saints is structurally sound again and can look forward to a secure future.



Figure 1: All Saints Snetterton from the south, late 19th century

The earliest remaining parts of the chancel date from the second half of the 13th century, with alterations in the 14th century and again in Victorian times. The plan of the church suggests that it was almost completely rebuilt the 13th century with many alterations in succeeding centuries, most notable when the north aisle added c 1450. There were major restorations carried out between 1852 and 1854*, which cost £1,200 and were paid for by the Rector, the Rev'd the Hon. Edward Southwell Keppel, (fourth son of the 4th Earl of Albermarle who lived at nearby Quiddenham Hall) and his wife, Lady Maria Keppel.

The Church was declared redundant in 1973, as it was deemed to be surplus to the requirements in the Diocese of Norwich. St Ethelbert's Church at Larling became the Parish Church for the residents of Snetterton Village. For several years a lone Anglican monk (Brother Joseph) lived on the site, but his attempt to create a small monastery here did not succeed. In 1978 Church was leased by the Diocese of Norwich to the Norfolk Churches Trust and they took on the responsibility for its upkeep.



Figure 2. South side of chancel

* There is no record of a Faculty for the work but it is referred to as recently completed in White's Directory of Norfolk & Norwich 1854.

Quick resumé of things to note:

All Saints is Grade I listed

OUTSIDE: The **chancel** has a large Victorian east window and an assortment of other windows, with the western most ones still having particularly fine 14th century Decorated tracery.

The **nave** has 13th century Early English doorways on both sides, and then the north aisle was added about 1450, at the same time as larger windows were put in the south nave wall. There are early 16th century porches on either side, although both were rebuilt in the 19th century.

The **tower** was built around the middle of the 14th century and has three stages, with flushwork on the buttresses.

INSIDE: The **north aisle** has tall 15th century pillars for its arcade. At the east end of the aisle there is, right in the northeast corner, a bracket supported by a lion's head. This formerly supported a statue in connection with the side altar here.

The **font** dates from the late 15th century, with alternate panels of quatrefoils and two cinquefoil arches to the bowl. It stands on an octagonal plinth in front of the tall tower arch.

At the east end of the nave, the **Rood screen** was restored and repainted in the 19th century in white, green and red, and also the highlights were gilded. It has unusual white coving with red ribs above its arches. There is gilding on the double cusping in the heads of the arches.

The **chancel** shows most signs of the Victorian restoration in the 1850s, with the altar elevated by three steps and the large east window filled with stained glass of that time. However, there is a fine double piscina, with two bowls, dating from the second half of the 13th century, and it has geometric tracery on three shafts. Its outer arch is supported by a lion's head on either side.



Figure 3: View from the north east

Detailed explanations of what is to be seen:

Exterior

Approaching from the gate in the northeast corner of the churchyard, the **chancel** is the first thing to see. Its north wall is fairly blank, with a small 13th century lancet window half way along, and a Decorated 14th century window close to the west end.

The original late 13th century east window was replaced in 1852, and now has the Victorians' interpretation of Decorated tracery. It has in the apex a large stone circle containing four trefoils set in the shape of a cross. Below this are two cinquefoils in the stonework, and the four main lights have rounded trefoil heads.

Referring to the lithograph by Robert Ladbrooke in the 1820s, drawn from the southeast viewpoint, the south side of the Church has been altered, presumably during the restoration of 1852. His print shows the chancel with higher walls and a lower pitched roof, covered with lead, (now it has slates), above two high, narrow, rounded windows in the south chancel wall. As far as the lower part of the south chancel wall is concerned the openings seem much the same as now, with a two-light window of Decorated tracery at the south west end, then a priest's doorway, and the south east window has Y tracery of perhaps the 13th century. Nowadays there is no trace of the two upper windows, and the whole wall could have been re-faced. The tracery in the southwest window is very attractive with additional cusping within the quatrefoil in the apex.

The **nave** has three fine late 15th century Perpendicular-style windows, with three lights, on both the north and the south sides. Those facing south are a bit taller as there is more wall space there than for those on the north side, where an aisle with a lean-to roof was added in about 1450. The tracery tends towards a panelled effect, typical of the Perpendicular



SNETTERTON CHURCH

Figure 4: Ladbrooke, View of All Saints from the south east 1820's

style. When Robert Ladbrooke saw the Church in the 1820s the south nave windows were blocked at the top and no tracery was visible. He also depicted a lower **south porch**, (c. 1501) with a short square-headed three-light window above it. Now it has a steeply pitched upper storey, and a square stone panel enclosing a slate sundial above its entrance arch and has two small windows facing east and west. Both porches were altered as part of the remodelling between 1852 and 1854. Within the floor of this porch is the indent in a large stone, where once a brass figure had been set. It is unlikely that the stone is in its original position, and was perhaps moved here when the Victorians reordered the chancel. It appears to have held the figure of a knight in armour, perhaps from about 1500. The porch encloses a 13th century doorway of many mouldings right round the arch, with no capital.

The Church was enlarged c. 1450 by the addition of a **north aisle**. Its three north windows have similar, but not identical tracery to those in the south nave. The arches at the tops of the main lights are slightly pointed (the south ones have rounded heads), and the windows are also a bit shorter, due to the lean-to roof of the aisle, and there is a similar window at the east end of the aisle. The aisle is now covered with slates, as are the nave itself and both porches. The north porch is plainer than the south one, with



Figure 5: North aisle and porch after 2019 repairs

no windows, and encloses an Early English doorway, with a simpler arch than the one over the south door. It was presumably re-used and moved northwards from the original nave wall when the aisle was added.

The sturdy **tower** was built around 1350 and has three stages marked by string courses. At the top is a battlemented parapet, probably added in the early years of the 16th century. The two-light east and west belfry openings have rounded quatrefoils in the apex, but the north and south ones have a slightly different tracery with a pointed quatrefoil. The diagonal buttresses ascend to the belfry stage,

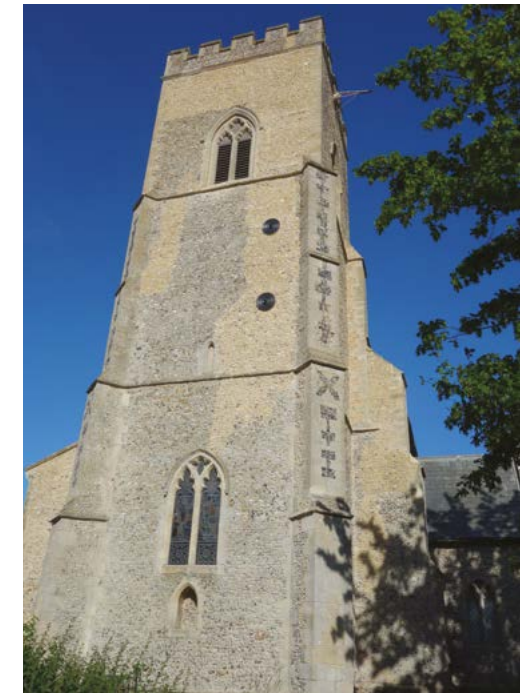


Figure 6: Lower level of tower

and have some black cut-flint flushwork patterns on their leading edges. Unusual is the black X in flints at the top of the ground floor stage on the west-facing buttresses, just below the lower string course.

On this string course rests a trefoiled opening facing south, and smaller slit openings facing west and north. Within the ground floor stage there is a two-light west window, with typical Decorated tracery. Just below this is a small plain niche, presumably for a statue. At ground level is a stone base course which goes round the three sides, and includes the two west-facing buttresses. The tower used to hold four bells, cast by John Darbie in 1672, but these were moved in 1986 to Barton Turf Church, as the P.C.C. there was intending to make up their peal of six bells.



Figure 7: Interior from west end of church

Interior

The interior of this Church seems surprisingly spacious, no doubt partially due to most of the fittings having been moved out to go to other churches after it was made redundant. A lectern, two Bishops chairs and one small pew were moved to nearby Shropham church, and the Altar to Hingham parish church. Both the organ and remaining pews were also removed then. Having for years had no pews at all, since 2006 it has had open-backed pews (c1900), formerly in St John's Church in King's Lynn, in the nave. At the west end and along the centre of the nave, the floor is covered with diamond-set unglazed tiles, called pamments. Near the east end of the nave, in the centre, are three 18th century black marble ledger stones. The centre aisle also has a grating for the Victorian heating system, which had its flue going up inside the tower. Alas the rest of the flooring is now basic concrete slabs.

The **15th century font** stands proudly on an octagonal plinth in front of the tower arch. Its eight sides have patterns of a quatrefoil within a circle on four sides, and a double panel with trefoil heads on the alternate sides. The stem has tall trefoiled panels.



Figure 8: Font

The **tower arch** is very tall and quite narrow with polygonal capitals. Within the tower west wall is a colourful window containing stained glass donated by James Reeve of Snetterton Hall. It shows the Baptism of Jesus in the River Jordan by St John the Baptist, and Jesus saying "Suffer the Little Children to come unto me" and designed by Michael O'Connor and Sons, c. 1853.

On the west nave wall, just north of the tower arch, is the War Memorial for those from Snetterton Village, who were lost in the Great War 1914-18. Made of brass set in an alabaster surround and lists the seven men from Snetterton who were killed in the war. It was installed in 1920.

There are two pillars of an unusual plan supporting the tall **north arcade**. They are lozenge-shaped, wider north-south, with the outer rounded mouldings going right round the arches, then a hollowed chamfer, and fine shafts with small capitals on the east and west faces. The pillars stand on three feet high bases.



Figure 9: Tower window

The arch-braced **nave roof** is supported by long wall posts on stone capitals with billet mouldings, and it has seven large decorative carved bosses all along the central ridge, and also along the purlins (the two other east/west rafters). These bosses are each carved with eight leaves, of slightly varying patterns, around a central carved knob, with half-bosses where these rafters meet the east wall. There are also wooden battlemented wall plates along the top of the walls.



Figure 10: Interior to west

In the **aisle** the roof is sloping, with pierced carvings within the spandrels of its braces against the nave wall. There are large bosses similar to those on the nave roof along the length. At the end of the aisle, between the north door and the west wall, is a stone arch, now blocked. It is unclear what its purpose would have been, but it could have been a cupboard or maybe it accessed a former upper room to the north porch? At the east end of the aisle, marking off the chapel there, is a small, somewhat rustic screen, but it does have neatly carved quatrefoils carved in its tracery.

In the north-east corner of the aisle, by the altar, at about five feet high, is a square shelf on a large lion's head, which would formerly have held a statue. On the other side of the altar is a blocked arch, believed to have been a "squint", an opening for the parson at this altar to observe the Mass being officiated at the high altar.

On the south wall of this chapel is a piscina under a plain arch, with a square bowl for the drain. This piscina is part of a massive block of walling at the east end of the arcade, which also included the stairs to access the top of the medieval Rood screen. Some of the steps are still there, but they start at about four feet above the floor. Perhaps additional wooden steps were needed at the bottom?

The **Rood screen** was heavily restored and repainted in 1852, with coving at the top, curving outwards both to east and west, with a white background, and red and gilded ribs. The complicated double cusping within the arches is also gilded. The base has panels with carved tracery dividing the space into three, with the backgrounds alternately red or dark green. The emblems in the spandrels are also gilded, and include foliage, an eagle, Tudor roses, and pomegranates.

On the east nave wall, either side of the top of the screen, are **Decalogue boards**, showing the Ten Commandments from Exodus, chapter XX. The first four, to do with man's relationship with God, are on the left side and the remaining six, dealing with man's relationship with other men, are on the right.

The nearby **south window** has stained glass made by Cox & Buckley as a

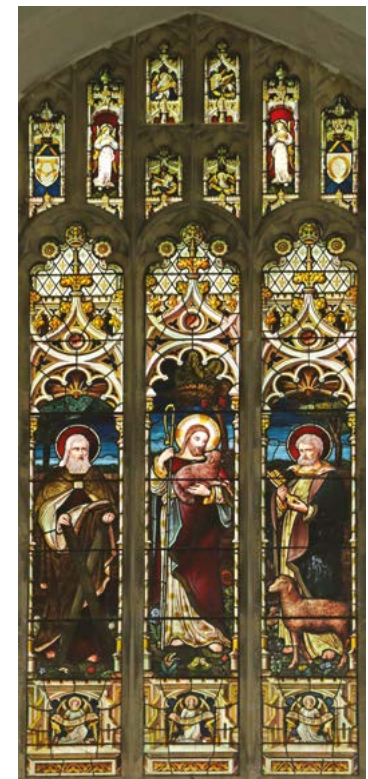


Figure 11: Nave window. South side.

memorial for the death in 1883 of the Rector, the Rev'd the Hon Edward Edward Southwell Keppel who had done so much for the restoration of the church. He was the Rector of this Parish from 1824 - 1883. It was given by Lady Elizabeth Clements. In the centre tracery are the symbols of the four Evangelists, the winged man for St Matthew, the winged lion for St Mark, the winged bull for St Luke and an eagle for St John. Either side of these are angels. In the main lights are St Andrew with his X, Jesus as the Good Shepherd, and St Peter with his key. Below these are three small panels of angels with relevant texts on their scrolls:- "We have found the Messiah", "I am the Good Shepherd", and "Thou knowest that I love Thee".

In this south-east nave corner is a small simple arched recess containing a piscina, with an eight-petalled drain, indicating that there was a former side altar here.

The **chancel** was originally built in the second half of the 13th century but the two western most windows were inserted in the 14th century. Entering

the chancel it is immediately evident that a lot was done here in the Victorian restorations. Begun in 1852 and completed by 1854. The 19th century scissor beam roof is held up by eight massive Victorian corbels. These are deeply carved with undercut foliage, of larger or smaller leaves all divided into many lobes, and each stem with a loop at the bottom. The floor levels were altered so that it rises through three steps to the sanctuary and is covered with the popular red and black encaustic tiles. The wide altar itself stands on a plinth.

On either side of the sanctuary remain two old benches, probably from the original ones that filled this Church.

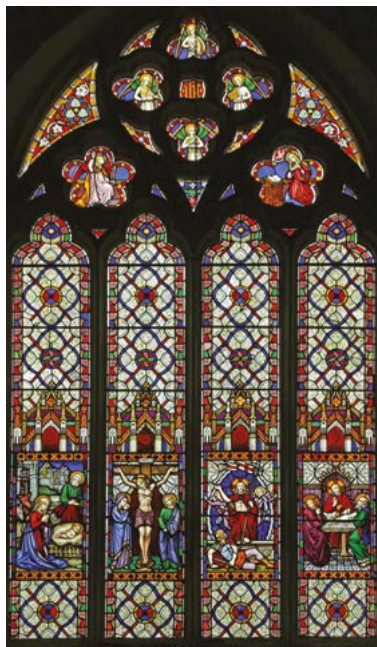


Figure 12: East Chancel window

The **east window** (1852), was designed by Michael O'Connor & Sons, and paid for by Lady Elizabeth Clements. In the top roundel are four angels playing musical instruments. Below them, in the cinquefoil lights is the Annunciation, with the figures of the Archangel Gabriel telling the Blessed Virgin Mary that she is to become the Mother of the Jesus. St Mary's symbol of a vase of lilies is in a small triangular light between these two figures. The four main lights are chiefly filled with patterned glass, but there are also four vivid scenes, of the Nativity, the Crucifixion, The Resurrection, and the Supper at Emmaus (when the Risen Jesus first revealed himself to his followers). There are slender stone shafts on either side of this window, probably remaining from the earlier 14th century window, before the Victorians replaced the tracery now holding the glass of this window.

Remaining from the second half of the 13th century is a particularly fine **double piscina**. The outer arch moulding ends in two fierce little heads, possibly lions, possibly demons. The inner arch has pierced tracery with a quatrefoil in a circle in the apex.



Figure 13: Chancel: Piscina, sedelia and priest's door.

Below this are two arches, containing trefoil heads, supported on three shafts in the Early English style. There are two bowls with drains forming the piscina. During the reign of Edward I, (1272-1307), it was regarded as unseemly for the priest to wash his hands in the same bowl that had been used to cleanse the Mass vessels, the chalice and paten, so it became fashionable for a short time to have two bowls. Adjacent to this piscina is a **triple sedilia**, stepped to show the degree of importance of the three people who might sit there awaiting their part of the Mass Service - the priest, the deacon and the sub-deacon. The height of these seats indicates that they have nothing to do with the position of the present floor. Also in this south chancel wall is the **priest's doorway**. Traditionally the priest paid for the upkeep of the chancel, and he therefore had his own doorway to access his part of the church. The congregation had to maintain the rest of the building, the nave, aisles, tower and porches.

Four benches from St Gregory's church in Norwich provide the choir stalls. They somehow seem more sophisticated, coming from a city church, than might usually be found in a country parish. The front panels have gilded carvings in the spandrels, of cherub heads with gilded wings, or flowers with green leaves, etc. Also of interest are the roundels on the bench ends, with basically green and gold backgrounds and including a shield with perhaps mason's marks, some pomegranates, a red Catherine wheel, a shield with a monogram, a basic Trinity symbol, and another blank shield. Behind these benches on the south side is the window with the attractive reticulated tracery, as noted from outside.

Restoration work 2018-2019.

Thanks to a substantial Heritage Lottery Fund Grants for Places of Worship grant awarded in 2017, augmented by additional money from the Norfolk Churches Trust, it has been possible to carry out extensive repairs, particularly to the tower, north aisle and chancel arch. All of which were considered to be in a perilous condition and the church was put on the Historic England Heritage At Risk Register. This was confirmed when a large section of flintwork on the west wall of the north aisle fell to the ground in Autumn 2016. There followed a year of investigations before the actual repairs started in June 2018, however it was only when the scaffolding was up and closer inspection of

the tower could be carried out that the full extent of damage to the interior structure of the walls became apparent. The main reason for this deterioration was due to water penetrating deep into the walls through cracks in hard cement mortar used for repairs in the mid 20th century and becoming trapped in the softer lime mortar used for the and causing it to crumble.

In one area, between the string courses on the south tower wall, the entire width had to be repaired, caused initially by the failure and splitting of one stone in the string course above. This wall repair was done in three sections, to avoid collapse of the remaining tower, particularly from above. As the loose material and powdery mortar was removed, the still-sound flintwork had to be boarded and propped. One third on the side was done first, then the other side, and finally the central section was tackled. In places the repairs are the full depth of the wall. Wherever possible the same dressed stones have been re-used, and the sound parts of discarded stones have been cut up for use in smaller situations. Where it was essential, new pieces of Stoke Ground Stone have been inserted. This was the nearest match in type and colour to the original stone used, mostly from Barnack, which quarry is no longer in use.

Where there is still cement work in place, but there appears to have been no internal damage, it has been left. There is much of this cement work in the top of the tower and parapet, but it is sound and removal could cause unnecessary damage to the dressed stone.

The Victorian heating system entailed the insertion of a flue ascending in the northeast corner of the tower: over time the construction for this had deteriorated and was letting water into the fabric around it, so this has been removed. The buttresses of the tower had been augmented at some stage by the addition of a secondary vertical layer against the outer faces, but this was not tied into the original work, and again this has been rectified.

These are but a few of the challenges faced by an exceptional team of specialists including the architect, structural surveyor and building contractors, all of whose skills were put to the test on this complex project. Thanks to them All Saints can now face a secure future at the centre of the extended community of 21st century Snetterton.

The Norfolk Churches Trust is indebted to the Heritage Lottery Fund for the generous grant that made the repairs possible and enabled us to share the heritage to All Saints with the people of Snetterton and our visitors from far afield.

Sources of information and Acknowledgements

Robert Ladbrooke, lithograph print. One of more than 650 Norfolk Churches by him and his son John Berney in the 1820s.

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Gethin Harvey (Nicholas Warns Architect Ltd): Project Architect

Stuart Armitrage, Morton Partnership. Project Structural Surveyor

Steven Briggs, Medieval Masonry: Contractor monthly project reports

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