

A short guide
to the history of
The Church of St Peter and St Paul
Ospringe



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2008

Welcome to the Church of St Peter and St Paul, Ospringe

We hope that you will find this short history and guide helpful.

It's fairly certain that there was a Saxon church of some importance on this site. That church was probably made of wood. Although way out of the village, it was close to the source of a spring; just across the lane (behind the Victorian bier house).

The Domesday records of 1086 mention a church here. The remains of this stone building are probably beneath, or part of, the north and south walls of the nave.

As you came up the path you may have noticed the Norman doorway in the north wall of the chancel. It is original whereas the windows are restorations. Unfortunately, it is now behind choir stalls erected by the Victorians, who also provided the fake Norman arch through which you entered the church.

By the 13th century the community was large enough to warrant a bigger church. The early English water stoup, to the left of the south door, is proof that the two aisles of the nave date back to that period. The bowl of the font that you can see just inside the north door, also dates from this period. It is of Kent Ragstone on a "modern" base. The chancel was extended during the 13th century, and it is believed that there was a SEPARATE lady chapel to the east of this chancel, which means that it would have been in the churchyard.

The size of the church has remained fundamentally unchanged since that time.

The Hart Chapel, 1320-1337, owes its existence to Robert and Thomas Hart who owned land around here in the 14th century. It is in the "decorated" style and two windows and the piscina are original. One window once had a stained-glass effigy of Thomas Hart but all that remains is the small shield bearing the family arms, in the west gable end of the chapel. In pre-Reformation times this chapel contained the Altar of St John the Baptist.

In the 15th century the north aisle had a major rebuild and there would have been a gallery that extended right across the church. The niche in the north wall of the nave was carved and steps to the rood loft were formed.

The windows in the wall of the north aisle of the nave are reproductions.

During the late 15th and 16th centuries the church was allowed to fall into a terrible state of decay, but things improved by the early 17th century when we received patronage from the Streynsham family and Jacob Master.

Jacob's son, Edward, married one of Streynsham's daughters and joined the two wealthy families together. Edward Master was very conscientious in his care of Ospringe and frequently wrote long despairing letters to the royal court, reminding them of their duty to "pay up and look good for the church" which stood on their land. All to no avail!

A memorial to Jacob Master, who died 1631, blocks a 13th century window in the north wall of the chancel.

By the 18th century the church had fallen into disrepair again. However, some private (box) pews were installed and two new galleries. There is an old photograph of the church showing the pews and a plan of ownership, on the pillars at the back but no pictorial record of the galleries as far as I know.

Then came the Victorians. The Rev William Nathaniel Griffin was appointed Vicar in October 1848 and took charge of the church in February 1849. He reported on the condition of the church as he found it and kept a record of the improvements that were made during his ministry.

The two windows in the north wall of the chancel are by Thomas Willement. The first depicts the arms of John Fisher, Bishop of Rochester (1504-1535), and those of St John's College, Cambridge. It was commissioned by the Fellows in 1853. John Fisher was chaplain and executor of the will of Lady Margaret Beaufort, grandmother of Henry VIII and carried out her intention in the foundation of St John's College, Cambridge. Much of this endowment was seized by Henry VIII and as some compensation Bishop Fisher persuaded the king to give the Rectory of Ospringe Church and surrounding land to the College.

Great changes were made between 1858 and 1862. New choir stalls were provided and the wooden screen between the chancel and the Hart Chapel was built. Outside, the south porch was rebuilt in oak and the embattled turret of the south rood staircase was restored.

In 1865 the barrel organ was replaced by a two manual pipe organ. This organ was rebuilt and enlarged in 1900.

Canon Griffin died in 1893 having served the parish for 45 years. The mosaic reredos behind the high altar was provided as a memorial to a much-loved Vicar. Note the inscription in front of the altar table (see *chapter 4: Fav. Soc. Paper no. 40, pp 12-13 for more details*).

Willement's monogram can be seen in the bottom right-hand corner of the window in the southeast corner of the Hart Chapel. We also have stained glass by Clayton and Bell.

The tower and bells

In the 13th century a circular tower built of flints and surmounted by a spire fifty feet in height stood apart from the main church building near the north-west corner. It collapsed in 1695 when the bells are said to have been rung for William III who was in "royal progress along the Street". Fortunately, no one was hurt. The hurriedly-built replacement fell down 50 years later!

In 1751 it was replaced by a bell cot erected at the western end of the ridge of the nave roof. This can be seen in a photograph at the back of the church.

In 1866 the Saddleback tower was built at the northwest corner. The cost was borne by Mr William Hall of Syndale who was the owner of the Faversham Gunpowder Works.

If you are interested in the bells, we hope that you will return when the tower is open. There are eight bells in the key of F#. They are not particularly easy to ring as the fittings are original, but the tone is very pleasant.

The parish room was erected at the west end in 1988 when the Shooting Gallery/Parish Hall was demolished. It provides a meeting place for the parish community with kitchen facilities, a priest's vestry, and toilets!

We hope that you enjoy your visit and will come back to visit us again.

There is a service here at 11am every Sunday
(fifth Sundays in the month may be at other Benefice churches),
and details of other services and opening times can be found on
the notice board by the lychgate.

Further information can be found in Faversham Paper No 40.
This contains information about Ospringe and Davington Parish Churches.
It can be purchased from the Faversham Society in
Market Place, Faversham.