

ALL SAINTS CHURCH:

The parish first appears in the Domesday account for Monkton (though not by name), where two chapels, a new fishery and salt beds are included. At this period, Monkton was our mother church, with chapels at Birchington and Woodchurch.

We do not know what the original building looked like, but in the **outside wall** of the south aisle there are some **re-used, worked Rag and Caen blocks**, which have been dated to early Norman or possibly earlier. There are also **two late 12th century capitols** in the south doorway. The original church would have contained a simple chancel and nave, similar to that still existing at Dode, near Snodland. In the 13th century our **chancel was rebuilt**, with the owners of Quex Park then adding a **north chapel** while the monks of Monkton added a **southeast tower and chapel**.

The **nave** of the old church was enlarged in c. 1350 and includes a Norman door on the north side. We learn from a copy of a contract of 1343 that it was originally planned to add a full sized south aisle. We can see the evidence for this plan in the **large southwest pillar** and the adjoining pilaster against the west wall. The Black Death almost certainly altered the plans, so that we ended up with **two half aisles** instead. Some time in the 14th century, **the spire** was added to the tower. The original framework is still in situ, though it has been much repaired over the ensuing centuries.

The next addition came in the 15th century with the building of the **south porch**. It was not until **1910** that any other major building work was done, when the **two vestries** were added in memory of Bishop Ellicott of Gloucester, who retired here in about 1895 and died in 1905.

Internally, we can still see evidence of pre-Reformation features, including the base panels of the **medieval rood screen** at the chancel steps, reinstated in 1905, and **one of the corbels** that held the great rood itself, on the north side of the chancel arch. The remains of the old **pillar seats** can just be seen, as well as many of the **masons' marks** on the pillars themselves.

We learn from the churchwardens' accounts about the taking down of the altars and the rood, and the whitewashing of the inside walls during the Reformation. We also know from a plan and an etching of the church in about 1830 that there was a gallery across the west end and the Jacobean pulpit stood beside the southeast pillar. At this time the **font** stood in the centre of the nave, amidst the large **box pews**.

The Victorians made their contribution between 1863 and 1883 by resurfacing the outside of all the walls except the south aisle with flints and putting in new windows frames in all except the lancets in the tower and Quex. The bench seats replaced the box pews and the **font** was moved to the south door. The west door, which had been blocked up when the gallery was installed, was reopened, while the north door was sealed up. The pulpit was moved to the

chancel steps and a Victorian version of the rood screen was installed. The chancel walls were all stencilled and decorated with angels and patriarchs.

All the **windows** were installed during this period, some by public subscription, others were by local benefactors. The most memorable is the pair donated by Mrs Rossetti, mother of **Dante Gabriel** and Christina, in memory of her son, who died in Birchington in 1882. These windows are west of the south door. The left light is a reproduction of one of his own paintings, while the right hand one was designed by another pre-Raphaelite, Frederick Shield. **Rossetti's grave**, which stands just outside the south porch, was designed by his friend Ford Maddox Brown.

During the latter half of the 20th century, the changes have been less dramatic, with the **whitening of the chancel walls**, the **removal of the Victorian rood screen**, the **removal of some of the crowded rows of pews** and the **re-siting of the font** to the blocked north door area. Through the generosity of the present owner of Quex Park, the **Quex Chapel** has been **made into a chapel of worship** once more, so that it can be used for the small mid-week services. **New lighting and heating systems**, together with a sound system have also been added more recently.

In this age of hi-tech, the **spire of All Saints stands like a beacon**, welcoming people into the village from as far away as the St Nicholas roundabout, encouraging travellers, as it has done since about 1350, to travel those last two miles with a lighter heart, knowing they are so near home.