

ALL SAINTS CHURCH:

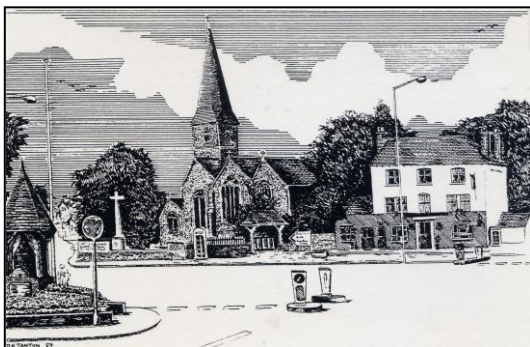
The church was originally a chapel of ease under Monkton and in its earliest form had a simple nave and chancel. Evidence for this older building can still be seen in the outside south wall, where there are some re-used stones. In c. 1250 the chancel was rebuilt, with the owners of Quex Park then adding 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. The large southwest pillar inside the church tells us of plans that had to be altered, probably because of the Black Death, so that we ended up with two half aisles under one massive roof. About the same time, the spire was added to the tower - it still contains its original framework. The south porch was added in c. 1430. The next addition was in 1910, when the two vestries were added.

Internally, there is evidence of some of the 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 beam itself. The Victorians made their contribution between 1863 and 1883 with a major renovation programme. All the windows and the reredos behind the altar were installed during this period.

The most memorable is the pair of windows in memory of Dante Gabriel Rossetti, who died in Birchington in 1882. The left is a reproduction of one of his own paintings, while the right was designed by Frank Shields. Rossetti's grave, which stands just outside the south porch, was designed by his friend Ford Maddox Brown.

Less dramatic changes have occurred in more recent times. Among them, through the generosity of the present owner of Quex Park, the Quex Chapel has been made into a chapel of worship once more. In this age of hi-tech, the spire of All Saints stands like a beacon, welcoming people into the village from 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.



All Saints Church, Birchington