

A Guide to the  
**PARISH CHURCH OF ALL SAINTS  
BIRCHINGTON**



The oldest parts of the church are the Chancel with its side chapels and the Tower. They belong to the Early English period and were built about 1250, the Chancel replacing the earlier one. The original nave was widened in about 1350 and some of the stones from the old walls can be seen on the outside south wall of the church.

1812

The earliest known date for a priest is Richard in 1293, but as Monkton was its mother church until 1871, the Vicar of Monkton served the church himself or sent a monk over from the community at Monkton from about 1060 onwards.

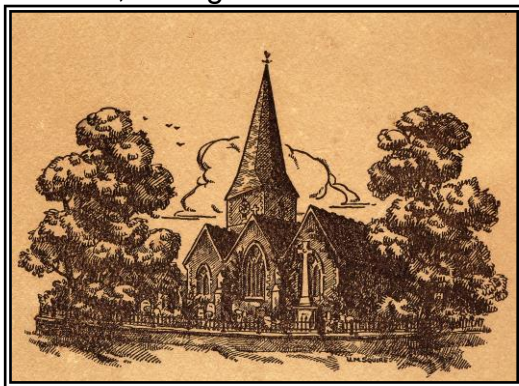
The **NAVE** with its half-aisles is 47 ft wide and 94 ft long and has five bays built in the Perpendicular style. There are the remains of the old seating round the base of some of the pillars. The 17<sup>th</sup> century Box Pews were removed in 1863 when the present seating was installed.

Kentish ragstone was used for the piers of the arcades and the massive western pier at the south-west end appears to have been the start of a new tower, but the Black Death diminished the labour force and capital so dramatically that the project was abandoned.

The octagonal **FONT** is Early English and of Kentish ragstone, supported on one large central shaft with four smaller round shafts of Bath stone. The basin is the original and there are impressions on the ledge where a candle stick and small lectern stood and traces where there was a hinged lock.

The **WINDOWS** - The West window represents 'Faith', 'Hope' and 'Charity' and was dedicated in 1873. The small pairs of windows in the half-aisles were all installed in Victorian times, the most interesting of which are the two just west of the South door, inserted in memory of Dante Gabriel Rossetti by his mother in 1882. The left light is a reproduction of Rossetti's own painting of the families of Joseph and Zacharius keeping the Passover, while the right one, by Frederick Shields, represents Jesus healing the blind man. Rossetti's grave is outside the South door. The theme of the great East window, dedicated on Whitsunday 1873, is the Crucifixion.

The **PULPIT** is 17<sup>th</sup> century, made of oak and hexagonal in design, with panels of ogee cinquefoil arches and Perpendicular tracery. When first placed in the church, it stood beside the South-eastern pillar, whose stone banding at the top of the pillar had to be chipped off, in order to fasten the sounding board, which once stood over the pulpit. It was moved to its present position in 1863, during the Victorian restoration.



The **LECTERN** in the form of a brass eagle, was presented to the church by Thomas Gray of Birchington Hall in 1877. The Hall was later sold to Spurgeon's Homes and in 1922 became their summer Home for holidays and recuperation. After WW 2 new accommodation was built and the whole orphanage was moved down to Birchington. The site is now Birch Hill estate.

The **REREDOS** is a triptych completed in 1883 and designed by C.N Beazley. It was painted by N H J Westlake F.S.A. at a total cost of £257. The centre panel represents the Last Supper and the small panels below from left to right

show:- *The Gathering of Manna, The Sacrifice of Isaac, The First Passover, Melchizedek offering bread and wine to Abraham, and finally, Moses Striking the Rock for Water.*

The **wings of the triptych** contain portraits of Saints etc. connected with Thanet.

Top left: King Ethelbert, Domneva, & St Mildred:

Lower left: Pope Gregory, St Dunstan & St Alphege:

Top right: St Milburga, St Milgitha & Queen Bertha:

Lower Right: St Anselm, St Thomas a Becket & St Augustine.

The **ALTAR RAILS** were made of oak by students from Canterbury College of Art designed by their tutor, Robert Paine in 1938. The twelve figures that form the supports are the saints depicted on the wings of the triptych but in a different order.

The **ORGAN** was built by T. Hopkins and Son in 1911 and was installed when the new vestries were built in memory of Bishop Charles Ellicott of Gloucester.

The **BELLS** have been built up over the centuries to their present number of eight. Their weights range from 4 to 9 cwt and their original range in ages ran from 1633 to 1901.

The **CLOCK** was installed in the tower in 1887 to commemorate Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee. The iron gilt dial is five feet in diameter. The clock mechanism was only electrified as late as 1987. Prior to that, it had to be hand wound each week.

The **ST MARGARET'S CHAPEL** was named after the wife of Malcolm III, King of Scotland. The chapel has had several names before Henry VIII broke with Rome. Up until 1911, the area had been used as a vestry and a storage area soon after the Reformation, but once the new vestries were added, its use as a place of worship was reinstated. The windows showing St Alban and St George were given by the old boys of Woodford House School in memory of their colleagues who died in two World Wars.

The **QUEX CHAPEL** used to be dedicated to St Mary the Virgin in pre-Reformation days. It was built by the owners of Quex Park in about 1250 and still remains in their ownership. The lancet window in the west wall gives that extra element of light so vital in the days of 'candle-power'.

The recumbent stone figures on the Altar Tomb represent Sir Henry Crispe, Sheriff of Kent in 1546 and his first wife, Lady Catherine Scott.

The Mural Monument above the altar tomb is by Joshua Marshall, Master Mason to Charles II. It is unique in that it is the only one in England with six busts. The lower busts represent Sir John Crispe (1551-1583) with his two wives, while the upper trio represents his son Sir Henry Crispe (1576-1647) and his wives.

To the west of the six busts is the Marble Memorial to Anna Gertruy Crispe, carved by William Palmer. In 1708 she left a farm on Crispe Road, Acol of 47 acres in trust, the income from which still funds the Crispe Charity. The wording beneath the bust gives some details from her will.

The next monument on the north wall is called the "Classic Column" memorial. Its fluted Ionic pillars are of Purbeck stone and were erected in 1744, to commemorate Sir Nicholas Crispe, his wife Thomasina and their daughter Ann and has later family additions.

The Alabaster Monument on the south wall of the chapel is to Sir Henry Crispe and his wife Marie. The smaller effigies depict their children; those holding skulls died before their parents.

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Remember those who built this Holy Place, those who have worshipped here down the centuries and the priests who minister here. May the Lord preserve your going out and your coming in for evermore.

