

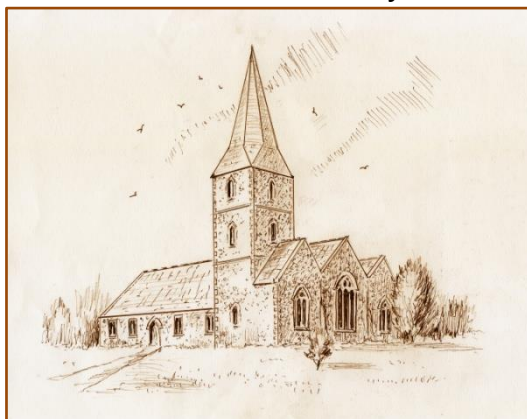
A Brief History of All Saints Church, Birchington

All Saints Church was built c. 1100, as can be seen by two worked-stones in the external south-west wall. The stones were re-used from the original south wall of the nave when it was enlarged in 1343. At first, the building had consisted of a simple Nave and small Chancel. The original Church was probably built by the monks from Canterbury Cathedral, based at Monkton, who owned and managed all the land on the west side of the Isle of Thanet. We were still a 'Daughter' Church of Monkton until 1871. The new Curate (the Rev. John Alcock) petitioned the Dean & Chapter of the Canterbury Cathedral to be made a separate Parish, as the village had increased in size rapidly after the arrival of the railway in 1863.

In c. 1250, the monks decided to enlarge the small Chancel and add a South Chapel, now known as St Margaret's Chapel, incorporating a squat tower above (probably to save money). At the same time, the Parker family, owners of the Manor House – which we now know as 'Quex Park' - added a Chantry Chapel on the North side of the new Chancel, (now Quex Chapel). It was built for a priest to say Masses for the departed souls of their family and still belongs to the present owners of Quex. The large unnamed lower part of the altar tomb on the north side of the Chapel probably holds an early member of the Parker family. Others lie in the crypt beneath the Chapel.

In 1343 it was decided to add a wide South Aisle, our massive pillar being part of that plan. The arrival of the Black Death (1348) killed about half the population and halted all the work until c. 1350-60. The plans were then changed, adding two small half-aisles under one roof span instead. About this time, the Tower was heightened and a Spire added. The 14th C. framework is still in place, and now includes many repairs in both iron and timber. The Spire has been re-shingled many times, the latest in 1968, using Canadian Red Cedar shingles. The Tower contains eight bells, the oldest dated 1633.

The Reredos was installed in 1883 during the Victorians' 'Restoration', when they removed the 18th C. box-pews from the Nave, the Gallery, across the west end unblocked the West Door and blocked up the North door. The Church Clock was installed in 1887 to celebrate Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee. The wooden altar rails were installed in 1938.



All Saints c. 1350

Jennie Burgess (Church Archivist)