



NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 2021

Letter from the Editor

Hello and Happy Christmas!

Well, the biggest news is that we are having an actual 'in-person' meeting on Monday 6th December at our usual venue in the hall at Woodford County High - see details below. Due to current restrictions please enter wearing a mask and keep on (unless you are eating/drinking). If possible, please take a lateral flow test before arrival.

Remember to raid the piggy bank as we'll have the Christmas Social Book Stall set up with (fanfare please) Norah Carlin's book on **Old Copped Hall** – a truly beautiful book.....I'll be getting my sticky mitts on a copy. Plus, we'll have the publications listed in last month's newsletter (enclosed again) along with the usual second-hand book sales – so please bring along any books you no longer want.

Refreshments will be provided by the committee, if you wish to bring some along yourself it would be very welcome. It's going to be lovely to see you and catch up with friends after such a long time but in the meantime please enjoy enclosed another great article by Claire and Lee on '**Church Porches**'.

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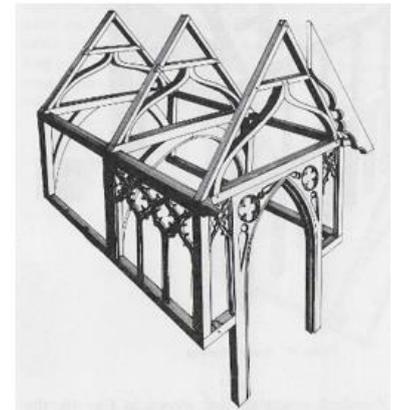
Church Porches

This article will look at the evolution of the church porch and how this was affected by changes in architecture, society and theology.

Most medieval churches contained several doors and as Dave Postles explains in “Micro-spaces: church porches in pre-modern England”, porches developed in different ways. “Porches were added to parish churches variously between the early thirteenth and the sixteenth century. Not all doors acquired porches; in particular the west door, a processional door, rarely developed a porch. Some north doors are associated with the clergy and were further embellished with porches, often shallow ones, although many remained without this edifice. Porches were more usually associated with the south door and it was in that location that porches achieved their largest size.” Porches do not have a very early history, the first in this country may be the one ordered in 1244 by Edward III for Westminster Hall. None survive in Essex earlier than the 14thC. Appendages similar to porches did exist from the late Saxon period (9thC) onwards but these are more accurately described as narthaxes or porticos and they are a subject of their own.



Aldham Church in Essex is sometimes referred to as the church that was moved. The literal moving of buildings is quite common in parts of the USA, Australia and New Zealand, but less so here. St Margaret & St Catherine's, Aldham, was “moved” about three-quarters of a mile from what is now Church House Farm to its present site at the crossroads in Aldham in 1854/55, incorporating many original features, and the 14th C porch may be the oldest in Essex (see photograph and diagram). Aldham



is a very fine example and very similar to St Mary's Boxford (Suffolk) and St Cecilia Little Hadham (Herts) but with superior carpentry.

The north porch of St Mary's (Boxford) is in all likelihood the oldest timber porch in England, it is an amazing survivor. The decorated tracery of the two-light side windows stylistically dates the porch to probably the early fourteenth century with the carpenter evidently intending the tracery to mimic masonry.

By the early medieval period several ceremonies took place by the door and porch, such as the churching of women, marriage and the initial



Marriage with bridal crown.
Marriage of Saint Waudru,
Chroniques de Hainaut, vol. II,
Bruges, 1468. Brussels,

stage of baptism. Even the Virgin Mary was ‘churched’ as this was an ancient Jewish tradition that goes back to books of Moses Leviticus 12:2-8. The exorcism of the child to be baptised took place in the porch, because it was necessary to expel the devil before the child was

taken inside to be baptised at the font. The porch's origin probably stems from the increased 'holiness' of the church in the early medieval period, so in the same way that markets moved outside the church, so did many civil activities. Initially this would have needed only a very simple covering, so that these activities could take place by the church door and out of the elements. Some believe that the ornateness of later porches was driven by the increased use of them for wedding ceremonies. Some porches later developed into two or three story structures that could serve a multitude of purposes.

Stone porches and decoration

In later years large stone porches became the fashion and wealthy benefactors would build ever grander edifices to secure a place in heaven and outdo their neighbours, this can be seen in the De Vere churches in the north of Essex such as Castle and Sible Hedingham. Royal patronage was also known and at Thaxted Lionel, Duke of Clarence, gave the south porch (c.1380) & Edward IV gave the north porch (c.1445).

Whilst the north porch at Hitchin (Herts) would be grand enough for most churches, the south porch is even grander. This boasts grand architectural details and is two bays deep, with four big niches beside the three lights of the upper room, and two more beside the entrance. Other key details include a small priapic caryatid figure, buttresses with angels carrying scrolls, and on the battlements are carved the three seated figures of the Trinity, with the kneeling donor with a book and his wife with her prayer beads. To each side are the merchant mark of Nicholas Mattock and arms of the Staple of Calais. Inside the porch are multiple mouldings and shafts around both doorways, and four crisply traceried windows lighting the bays of lierne vaulting. Here the main tierceron ribs are doubled up, and bosses bear the figure of Christ showing his wounds, angels, male and female faces, lions, roses, beasts and a pelican in its piety. Even the wooden doors bear tracery patterns; the porch, whose detail we have barely touched on, would stand comparison with any in England.



John Le Keux
South Porch of Hitchin Church



In architecture, flushwork is the decorative combination on the same flat plane of flint and ashlar stone. If the stone projects from a flat flint wall then the term is proudwork, as the stone stands "proud" rather than being "flush" with the wall.

Flushwork buildings belong to the Perpendicular style of English Gothic architecture, the most survivors being East Anglian churches. Flushwork began in the early 14th century, reaching its peak during the wool boom between about 1450 and the Reformation of the 1520s, when church building virtually ceased and brick construction became more fashionable.

The south porch (c.1490), Church of St Edmund, Southwold

The reintroduction of bricks and tile to England was almost solely for use in religious buildings. Essex was very quick to adopt this new way of building (there being little natural stone) with the tile roof on St Martins in Chipping Ongar (Essex) amongst the oldest in Northern Europe. The Chapel by the

Wall at Coggeshall (c.1220) is one of the oldest brick built buildings in the country and was made using the Coggeshall great brick. Recent research has also shown that brickwork was being used on the site as early as the 1190's. Waltham Abbey was also built using great bricks, great bricks are so called because of their greater dimensions. The use of bricks in Essex reached its zenith at the time of the Tudors when many great houses were also made of brick.

Diaper meaning simply "diamond" or "diagonal," became popular with the rise of Tudor brickwork. Diapers usually took the form of diagonal and diamond shapes after which they were named but heart, saltire crosses, zig zags and many other patterns including chequered patterns were sometimes used. Examples include Feering and Sandon. The American word 'diaper' meaning nappy comes from this same root as it was a piece of cloth woven with a diamond pattern.

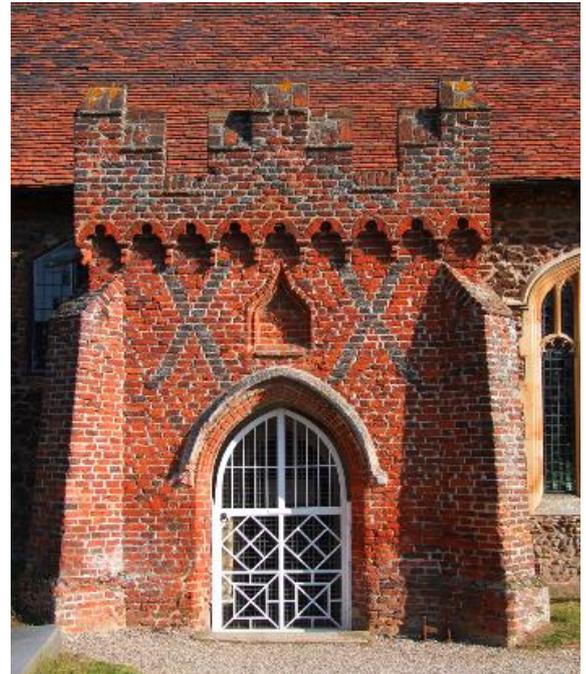
The porch often also contained a water stoop, containing holy water. By crossing themselves with holy water on entering and leaving the church parishioners were symbolically renewing their baptism.

Burial

By the 16th century the porch was also seen as a high status place to be buried. For example in his will of 1533 Simon Burkingham a yeoman of Suffolk asks to be buried under the north porch of St Margaret's Church and in the same year his wife Eleanore asks to be buried in the same north porch, "next unto my husband". It is significant that they specify the north porch, as prior to the reformation different doors were used for different ceremonial purposes, and even after the reformation the north door would be used if it was the most convenient. In being buried in the porch they would have had a prominent place in the life of the church, noticed by all who entered the church and hopefully prayed for during the mass. Prayers by the living were a way of shortening the soul's stay in purgatory and hastening the journey to heaven

Secular uses

Many large later porches had an upstairs room known as a parvise and these rooms came to be used for a variety of often civil purposes. In Saffron Walden for example the Guild of the Holy Trinity, a form of early local administration set up in 1514, met in the room. It continued to be used for local government up to the creation on the Town Council and Town Hall in the 19thC. Even then the records continued to be kept in a chest in the upper room of the porch. They were only moved for safety in WWII and the porch was used in the ceremonial swearing in of a new mayor until the 1980s. It was only in 2010 that the ownership of the upstairs room of the porch was finally legally declared to the church. The parvise was also often used as a library or as in the case at Mendlesham (Suffolk), an armoury. The upper floor of the north porch, originally a priest's room, contains - "the most complete armoury of any English parish church" (Pevsner).



Sandon blue brick diaper work, with ogive niche, bricked up, above the arch has rib vault and battlements above trefoil corbel frieze (Pevsner)



Armoury on show at Mendlesham Church, and pictured is Father Philip Gray.

As well as the parish collection of armour, assembled at the time of the Armada, it contains part of an Elizabethan longbow, several parish chests, a 'Vinegar' Bible and other artefacts. These days rooms above porches can just as often be used for Sunday schools, play groups or just plain storage.

Claire Hooper and Lee Joyce

Selected Bibliography

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WEAG CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Lecture Program

2021 Lectures are accessible via Zoom at 7:15pm – All except for the Christmas Social which will be in the committee room at Woodford County High School, High Road, Woodford Green, IG8 9LA from 7:30pm.

Non-members are welcome to attend Lectures. A voluntary contribution of £2 would be appreciated from guests.

Monday 6 December 2021 @ 19:30

Christmas Social (book sales and refreshments) and roundup of member activities at Woodford County High. See next page for list of books available and their special member prices.

Monday 1 January 2022 @ 19:15

Details to be confirmed

Monday 14 February 2022 @ 19:15

Details to be confirmed

Monday 14 March 2022 @ 19:15

Annual General Meeting. Speaker: Harvey Sheldon, Birkbeck College, WEAG President.

Monday 11 April 2022 @ 19:15

Details to be confirmed

Monday 9 May 2022 @ 19:15

The Rudge Lecture – 'to be announced'.

Monday 13 June 2022 @ 19:15

Details to be confirmed

Monday 12 September 2022 @ 19:15

Details to be confirmed

Monday 10 October 2022 @ 19:15

Details to be confirmed

Monday 14 November 2022 @ 19:15

Details to be confirmed

Monday 5 December 2022 @ 19:30

Christmas Social (book sales and refreshments) and roundup of member activities at Woodford County High.

CHRISTMAS SOCIAL BOOK SALE

	RRP	Special Offer Price
The Romano-British Temple at Harlow	£ 7.00	£ 3.50
Exploration and Discovery in South West Essex	£ 7.00	£ 3.50
Archaeology – what it is and how to do it	£ 9.50	£ 8.50
Copped Hall Report 2003	£ 4.00	£ 2.50
Copped Hall Report 2004 / 5	£ 7.00	£ 2.50
Copped Hall – A Short History (Cassidy)	£ 2.50	£ 2.50
Annual Review 2008/2009	£ 0.50	£ 0.50
Annual Review 2009/2010	£ 0.50	£ 0.50
Annual Review 2010/2011	£ 0.50	£ 0.50
Annual Review 2011/2012	£ 0.50	£ 0.50
Wanstead Park – Revealed (DVD)	£ 3.00	£ 1.50
Wanstead Park – Living Park (DVD)	£ 3.00	£ 1.50
The Wanstead Archive (DVD)	£ 3.00	£ 1.50

