

Rector John Barham Johnson died 1902 and the present choir stalls were built in his memory and that of his lawyer brother Henry Vaughan Johnson. The stalls show a variety of interesting carvings. At one end of the adult stalls an angel with a sword confronts Adam and Eve; at the other end the Angel Gabriel addresses the Virgin Mary. The children's stalls feature an Owl in a tree, an Eagle and Nightingales that appear to be in full song.

The Woodcarver was J.E. Taylerson.

The oil painting (a copy) in the south east corner of the nave shows John The Baptist and the child Jesus in a happy scene with their mothers.



On the outside Chancel south wall below a window are two shields. One contains an emblem of The Holy Trinity and the other Three Crowns for 'All Saints'



We hope that you have enjoyed your tour of Welborne Church and would leave you with these words. "This House of God has been used for prayer for many centuries. Join your prayers to those of past ages and your hopes for those which are yet to come. Give thanks to him for the men who built and adorned this Church. Pray that we may so live after their good example that when this life is ended we may be partakers with them of life everlasting. Pray that all who worship in this Church may remain his faithful servants to their lives end"

Hardric 2013

# WELBORNE

## Church of All Saints





Whilst lost in the mists of time it is only conjecture and to a degree wishful thinking that this church has stood on its present site for a thousand years. What we do know as fact is that in circa 1280 The De Hingham (or De Hengham) family built the early English style church on the very site where today's church stands. Regretfully the only surviving feature is the north door-way (now blocked).

Many experts have examined the existing church and tower structures over a period of years but it would be fair to say that extensive alterations have taken place during each preceding century. Saxon, Norman and post Norman? Particularly in relation to the tower. When considering the combined opinions of numerous experts, Charles Cox, Munro Cautley, W. J. Goode and the 1999 edition of Pevsner uncertainty remains over several aspects of its constructional history, particularly with respect to its original date the nave width and alterations to the nave walls.

One thing is pretty certain; the tower is not Saxon or Norman. Its medieval brick putlog holes and traces in its west wall of a blocked window with medieval brick jambs and the fact that it covers the blocked lancet of the west window surely confirms a post Norman date for the lower part with a rebuilt upper stage.

Depending upon which architectural expert you wish to believe the church tower could have been built any time between the 11th and 14th century with major alterations taking place in the late 17th or early 18th.

The following constructional chronology of the church is suggested:-

Late 12<sup>th</sup> century? Church built with a 25 foot wide nave and flint west quoins.  
13<sup>th</sup> century: Nave north wall partially rebuilt and heightened with a north door. Lancet window formed in the west wall. West wall heightened.  
14<sup>th</sup> century: Round tower added, tangential to nave west wall. Tower arch formed. Nave west lancet window blocked. Nave west wall south of the tower and south wall rebuilt with medieval brick south west quoins and incorporating south door.  
15<sup>th</sup> century: South porch built. Nave walls raised (to accommodate porch roof) re-entrant fillets extended.  
17<sup>th</sup> century: Chancel rebuilt.  
18<sup>th</sup> century (or possibly earlier): Top of tower rebuilt replacing original belfry with plain walls, conical roof and dormer sound holes. Tower west window formed? Most south west brick quoins renewed.  
19<sup>th</sup> century: Chancel rebuilt again. Nave windows renewed. Pantile nave roof. Gables lowered with corbel kneelers.

The North East Nave window shows Mary Magdalene with flowers and Saint Francis with birds. Both North Nave windows were glazed by Canon Busby to illustrate The Beatitudes in Christ's Sermon on the Mount.

The Pulpit of pollarded oak was carved by Charles Green a Welborne farmer's son. Samuel Porret helped to assemble the pulpit. Look out for the curious faces hidden in the corners.



In 1875 John Parling or possibly Parley son of a Mattishall man carved the Lych Gate, South Door, The Lectern, Oak organ case and most of The Rood Screen.

On The Lych Gate dated 1880 look out for carvings of poppies in the corn and for a mouse in the top right corner plus shields with emblems of The Passion. There is a text 'They will be always praising Thee'

The Rood Screen was re-painted and gilded in 1912. The English translation of the screen inscription reads as follows: - O SAVING VICTIM, WHO OPENS WIDE THE ENTRANCE TO HEAVEN. HOSTILE WARS OPPRESS (us). GIVE US STRENGTH, BRING HELP. This is the penultimate verse of a Eucharistic hymn written by St. Thomas Aquinas at the request of Pope Urban IV.







The Font is a simple medieval one and at one time it stood in the church yard for approximately 50 years growing flowers.

The Font cover is in memory of John Woodhouse, Bishop of Thetford who lived in the rectory from 1945 to 1953.

Until 1805 the tower housed 3 bells. The present single bell is described as 'quite plain and without inscription or mark'

The North West Nave window depicts King David and Moses. The border of David's light is enhanced by a pattern including his harp D for David and a crown. Likewise Moses has a serpent on a cross M for Moses and Bulrushes.

Moses is shown here with the two tablets and two shafts of light emanating from the top of his head. This refers to Exodus 34:29-35 when he came down from Mount Sinai and his face shone after being in the presence of God.

In Medieval times Moses was usually drawn with horns on the top of his head due to a mistranslation of the Hebrew word for 'shone'



Standing in our present surroundings it would be hard to imagine the neglect prevalent but in 1844 a homily of 1547 by the Rector John Barham Johnson described the following scene as similar to that of his father's time and that of his father's predecessor Grigson Heighoe in 1769 :-

- 1 Church walls were green as grass some feet from the floor.
- 2 In the church soil lay two to three feet above the level of the floor.
- 3 Roof was thatch, tar ropes bound the thatch to the rafters.
- 4 The tower was used as a coal house for parish coal. When the farmers bought home the winter stock it was their habit to lead the horses of the wagons into the church out of the cold.
- 5 It was common practice for burials to take place inside the church before 1844 by the farmers without metal coffins.



The horrible nasty smell of Welborne church apparently made a lasting impression on John Barham Johnson who recalled "It was a smell I have never known before or since, tis as well it should be so" Apparently these terrible conditions had prevailed over many centuries. During the reverend Grigson Heighoe's time his horse would be led through the church and stabled in the tower during a service.

Research for the book 'Welborne a place of no importance' bought the following fact to light:- In Valley Farm lived an elderly couple Fuller Waller born 1759 and his wife Jemina born 1751. After his death in 1831 Fuller Waller was buried inside the church near the south door. When his wife died in 1845 John Barham Johnson declared that he would not allow her to be buried alongside her husband unless her family provided a lead coffin in a brick grave with a five guinea fee. This was not forthcoming so Jemima was buried outside the church but as close to the wall near her husband's grave as possible.

The misfortunes of Welborne church appear to have turned the corner in the mid 1840's when the then rector John Barham Johnson took on three tasks simultaneously. To build a parsonage, built 1846 (now a nursing home) establish a school and refurbish the church. Improvements to the church in 1845 included an 'Arnot' stove for heating. In 1865 after the erection of the new chancel a 'Hot water warming apparatus' was installed with pipes beneath the floor of the chancel, organ chamber and vestry. A 'Registry stove' and fireplace was installed in the vestry. In 1879 'Kneeling Forms' and a mat for the floor were installed for every member of the congregation.



In the 1870's the entire chancel was rebuilt. A clearer view of the complex process involved is given in the 'Terrier' of 1879( a record of all church possessions). The new chancel with vestry and organ chamber was erected in 1874-75. The work was carried out by William Hubbard an East Dereham builder. It appears that even in 1874 there was a shortage of skilled stone masons.

### **Congregations.**

In the 1700's church attendance at Welborne is recorded as 'poor.' During Grigson Heighoe's ministry the records for 1734 show on many occasions only he and his clerk were present and in 1844 only 3 or 4 communicants attended during Rev. John Johnson's time. By 1841 Rev. William Cowper Johnson recorded an average congregation of 20. In the 1860's Barham Johnson noted average attendance of 55 in the mornings and 90 in the afternoons.

1883 March 28th attendance 100

1883 Nov. 18th attendance 76

1884 March 30th attendance 110 - population of Welborne 195

1886 March average attendance 46

1887 February average attendance 50

2012 Sunday average attendance 18- population of Welborne 153

### **Items to appreciate**

The South Porch has survived from the Perpendicular period. In its east window is an assortment of 15th century stained glass. It was given to Welborne by the Rev. Robert Barry rector of North Tuddenham who bought a great collection of glass fragments from a builder's yard. The Rev. Armstrong of Dereham thought that it might have come from Billingford near North Elmham. A blacksmith named Howe made the 'Twist Snake' handle on the south door. Another blacksmith John Doy was responsible for the wrought iron candlesticks dated as made in the 1930's, he probably made the wall brackets.



Inside the main entrance hanging on the west wall is a large clock. The clock face came from the Church room formally the school established in 1847 and is clearly visible from the pulpit for an obvious purpose. Written on the face is the text "Now is the accepted time" from 2 Cor.6:2 meaning 'Now is the time for accepting God's favour.



The Altar Reredos has Christ the King flanked by a Pelican feeding its young with blood from its own breast and the Lamb of God along with smaller animals such as snail and lizard. It is worked in Tabernacle style combining colours of red, green and gold. The East window gives a full range of scenes from the life of Christ. It is worth looking behind the Reredos to see the temptations in the wilderness portraying a very red faced devil.

