



**CHURCHES VISITED AND REVISITED
(17/12/16 TO DATE) – BOOK 12**



Whilst reviewing my mini booklets, I have found a few churches that I have omitted, so these have now been included below and added a few seen recently too –

EARLY 2017



Hope Community Church, Ventura Drive, Hythe, Colchester

The Hope Church was formerly the Colchester Area Community Church and meet at the Hythe Community Centre. They are non-denominational church that is seeking to help followers of Jesus Christ apply God's Word to everyday life.

THURSDAY 19th JANUARY 2017



Methodist, Chapel Road, West Bergholt

The West Bergholt Methodist Church is one of a family of churches (the other churches being those in Boxted, Mile End and Highwoods) in the Colchester Methodist Circuit.

The church publishes a monthly newsletter for its members and friends called 'The Link' and this provides details of upcoming services and events.

THURSDAY 20th APRIL 2017



Old All Saints in Zoo, Maldon Road, Colchester

The original All Saints was situated in the grounds of the Colchester Zoo and this was backed up by an article on the Zoo's website. It said that the ruins of All Saints (the former parish church of Great Stanway) stand in the grounds of the Colchester Zoo.

An excavation was made by an Archaeological Solutions in January 2005 that revealed that fourteen strips, CAT excavated thirty-four medieval inhumation graves on the site of the proposed new orang-utan enclosure.

SATURDAY 29th APRIL 2017





St Mary's, Marsh Road, Burnham-on-Crouch

Christian worship has been offered here on the site of St Mary's Church for over 800 years. We know there was a church on this site in 1155 and the earliest visible craftsmanship to be seen is the font, which survives from the 12th century.

The Church has changed a lot over time with major taking place in nearly every century. The most significant change was in the 18th Century due to damage from a major storm in 1702, when the tower was severely damaged, and in 1774, when the body of the church caught fire.

The interior of St Mary's is distinctive. It is long and low, which creates a tunnel-like effect, due to the continuous plaster ceilings, which cover an unbroken length of some 93 feet and date from 1774 – although the south side roof was renewed in 1979. Extra light is given by the plain and rustic windows in the nave roof. At the centre of the nave hangs a fine chandelier, believed to be 17th century, which hangs from a pretty plaster pattern. The chandelier was converted from candles to gas lamps and subsequently to electricity in 1935 and in the late 1990s reverted to candles.

The aisles are divided from the nave by arcades of nine bays. This is a remarkable number for the size of the church. The arcades are a dominant feature of the church and they stretch for its entire length.

Following extensive renovation work in 2008 the west end of the north aisle has been converted into a vestry/meeting room, which is named after the Shrine of Our Lady at Walsingham. The guardians of the Shrine are the patrons of the living and the Parish has enjoyed close links with the Shrine over many years. Included in the room is a beautiful niche which has a mass of 14th century stone-carving, including leaves and flowers.

Access to the tower staircase is through the toilet by way of a mediaeval door which is bound with iron. This leads to the bell chamber in which six bells hang, the oldest of which dates back to 1415.

There are a number of notable memorials in the church including plaques on the walls and ledger-slabs on the floor. One commemorates the fire of 1774 and is made from 18th century roof lead. Also in the north chapel is a tablet to members of the family of Rev'd Alexander Scott, who was Curate of Burnham for many years from 1808 and, during the time of an absentee Vicar, was also Vicar of Southminster. He was Chaplain on board H.M.S Victory at the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805, and Lord Nelson died in his arms.

Amongst the plate held by the church is a cup and cover, also a paten, made in 1638, an 18th century flagon, also some tasteful 19th and 20th century plate, including a ciborium given in 1977.

The registers of the church date back to 1559 and are held by the Essex County Archives.

FRIDAY 7th JULY 2017



St John's, Valley Road, Great Clacton

St John's and St Marks are the two Church of England churches in the Parish of Great Clacton.

St John's is located in Great Clacton Village and St Mark's in Lyminton Avenue.

We meet on Sundays and other days in the week to encourage and help one another, and to focus on Almighty God whom we worship and serve.

Although we meet in two different buildings, we're one big church family. And like any family, we're all a bit different! Big ones, little ones, young ones and older ones. But Sunday by Sunday we meet up to sing and to pray, and to learn more about God from the Bible.

FRIDAY 14th JULY 2017



Congregational, East Street, Tollesbury

The other large church in Tollesbury opposite the square is the Congregational Church. Tradition accords the foundation of Tollesbury Congregational Church to 1803. However, the church records show that the Independent cause in Tollesbury was already under discussion in the years preceding. A meeting was held in Witham in December 1802, to consider the subject, including the purchase or hire of a building for public worship in Tollesbury. About this time, Mr Rudkin of Abbots Hall purchased a cottage in Tollesbury and fitted it up for worship, which was served regularly by William Merchant of Layer Breton and Mr. Forster.

However, this cottage was found 'highly inconvenient, and indeed from its extreme heat through the multitude which attended, dangerous', so a new meeting house was erected in 1803 and the Revd Mr. Harding of Duxford nominated as minister.

A Declaration of Faith was laid down in 1824, administered by the minister, Revd John Trew, and Revd William Merchant. Several ministers succeeded Trew until March 1850, when Revd John Spurgeon, father of Charles Haddon Spurgeon, was appointed. His ministry extended to 1863 when he was followed by Revd William Marker Anstey of Fakenham. Two years after his appointment, a new chapel and minister's house were built, and in subsequent years the school room was twice enlarged. William Basil Anstey of Leyton Congregational Church succeeded his father as minister in 1893 and served the church until 1920. A number of ministers followed, until the ministry of Revd David Bentley, who witnessed the 150th anniversary of the church in 1953. The church affiliated to the United Reformed Church in October 1972, but seceded in May 1983, when it rejoined the Congregational Federation. Usually in Congregationalism there is a minister who heads up a team of people, often called deacons, who administer and lead the church. Currently there is no minister in situ here, but there is a team of deacons in place who oversee the church.

FRIDAY 28th JULY 2017



Orchard Church, Blackheath, Colchester

Seen from the bus - they are a community of Christians based in Blackheath, Colchester, Essex. They meet every Sunday at 10:30am to worship, learn about and experience God in contemporary and relevant ways.

They believe in a God who is able ... able to heal, able to change circumstances, able to transform lives, and able to save. A God who is able to make a real difference to your life and to the lives of those around them, today, here and now! And so, as a Church they want to serve their community in whatever way they are able, with a message of hope, truth and love.

They are very excited about what God is doing in them, and through them and they would love for you to be a part of it. So what are you waiting for? Come and experience Orchard for yourself.

During one of our services at the church, people were encouraged to write down how God had been at work bringing about change in their lives.

A church is far more than just a building, it is defined primarily by the people in it and what they do. As such, you will not find much here about the church building – you'll have to come and visit to find out more about that!

They are a community of Christians, with a regular Sunday congregation of about sixty people, covering an age range from 9 months to 90 years and coming from diverse backgrounds too: students, teachers, factory workers, self-employed specialists, managers, unemployed, families, and many more!

As a community they aim to be inclusive rather than exclusive, which means that they are welcoming to all.

They hope that you'll find them warm and friendly – there are opportunities at the end of their services for sharing tea and coffee and getting to know each other better, and there are many other activities throughout the week that you can come to and make new friends.

They also support missionaries working in other countries throughout the world.



St Cedd and St Gregory, Bardfield Road , West Mersea

A utilitarian design of the 1960's, built as a dual-purpose church and hall. It is a chapel-of-ease, served from St James the Less in Colchester. A Mass centre was established on Mersea Island in 1949 and the present church opened in 1962 Its architects have not been established but similarities to the attributed church at Monkwick (qv), suggests that the design is by Burles and Newton of Southend-on-Sea.

The church is built of Fletton brick, with faceted concrete block panels on the front elevation. The roof is of concrete tiles and the church is lit by a clerestory of the flank elevation and a glazed gable on the (ritual) wet front. The windows and fascias have largely been renewed by UPVC. The entrance is via modern hardwood door into a side range with a flat felt roof. The interior has not been inspected.



St Peter, High Street, West Mersea

The Parish Church is probably the most interesting building in West Mersea and it has been seen to feature throughout this brief history of the Island. It is believed that the first church was built on Roman foundations in the late 7th or early 8th Century. It was rebuilt in the mid 10th Century and the base of the present tower probably dates from this building. The Chancel and Nave were possibly rebuilt in 14th Century with the South Aisle even later. The structure visible today is made up of ragstone, septaria, Roman and later brick with limestone dressing, brick and Roman tile. The external facing is roughly coursed with some herring-bone areas. Whilst from the architectural side the style is a mixture of perpendicular and decorated with more modern additions.



St Margaret's, Stanstead Road, Colchester

There has been a church here for almost a thousand years, in one form or another. Originally it was a small wooden chapel, it catered for those working in the Berechurch area (Berechurch means "Church in the Cornfields") to save them having to walk all the way to St John's Abbey to worship.

(1520) - St. Michael and All Saints Church is now a brick and stone building with an embattled West Tower. The original foundation is 14th Century, but it was rebuilt in 1500 and again in 1872.

Berechurch Hall, the mansion of West Donyland, is first mentioned as being acquired by Sir Thomas Audley, Lord Chancellor to King Henry VIII and Speaker of the House of Commons, after St. John's Abbey was dissolved. Members of the family built the little family church, where many of them are buried.

It is recorded that in 1537 the Parish of Berechurch numbered 37 people. Thomas Audley had a very dark side to his character. It is said that on his black marble gravestone, which is situated in another part of the county, it is written, 'That the stone was no blacker nor harder than his heart'!

(1960) - The post World War Two years saw a boom in building and the population of Colchester then rapidly increased with the influx of people then displaced from London. New Estates sprang up to the South. The Monkwick Estate was fully within the ancient parish of Berechurch, swelling the population to several thousand.

As part of the provision for the new community a dual purpose Church Hall (church on Sunday, community hall mid-week) and Vicarage were built at the junction of Mersea Road and Stansted Road.

(1970) - The decision was made that a new church building should be built, but rather than hiring a construction company the congregation took on the bulk of the construction work themselves – yes, they built their own church!

The lorry driver's face was a study the day he and his load of 8,000 bricks arrived at the site of the new church, for waiting to unload the bricks were a group of eager housewives. "You're never going to do this yourselves!" gasped the lorry driver. "Why not?" retorted the group proudly. "We're helping to build the church."

And since that bitterly cold day the ladies of St. Margarets Church, near Colchester, Essex, have never once sat back and let their husbands do all the heavy work for their "do-it-themselves" church. Instead, they've put on their jeans and boots, rolled up their sleeves and got cracking with jobs like unloading lorries of bricks and timber, preparing the strips for the roof, and finishing off all the brickwork which their husbands learnt how to lay at evening classes.

"The men could only work in the evenings and weekends so it would have taken them far longer if they hadn't helped," said Violet Radley, an industrious corner-stone of the housewives' building corps. "It was their Vicar who suggested they unload the lorries because they always delivered during the day when their men weren't around. Altogether they've unloaded over 45,000 bricks, dozens of 24ft. long lengths of timber and eight half-inch glass doors. It took eight of them to lift each one!

"We had to ask that very first lorry driver how to unload his bricks. He told them how to hold three together like a wafer of ice cream. Then they formed a chain to the hut where the materials were being stored and passed them along. We won't say they didn't drop any bricks. But at least none landed on their toes!" Violet, a cheery forty-two year old with two teenage children. recalled their first "brickies" experience as they stood on the muddy building site beneath the church's skeleton frame with the main roof beams soaring into the sky.

In the hut, ten of the housewives were cutting the strips with an electric saw. Later, in her comfortable home a stone's throw from the site, Violet showed the photos of the completed model of the church. Its design is futuristic with a special triangular chimney for the light to beam through to the altar area. It will seat two hundred and fifty in a semi-circle.

At present, parishioners use a hall by the building site for both their worship and social events. The idea to build their own church came to Jean Sly, the Vicar's pretty young wife, in the middle of the night. She woke up her husband who thought the scheme crazy. But next morning, after going into the money aspect of things, he changed his mind. When the church is finished, by the end of next year, the bill should be about £15,000 – under half the normal cost.

"When I first heard Mr Sly say we would do it ourselves, I thought: crumbs we'll never manage," said Violet.

Now she and the other ladies, there's a hard core of about a dozen, like to think that the men could not have managed without them. To protect her hands against the rough work, Violet started off wearing rubber gloves. But she got through so many pairs, that she settled for some old leather gardening gloves.

And to help her husband, Fred, a forty four year old electrician, who works nights on the site, to beat the cold during the wintry months, she knitted him a bobble hat and half-mittens without finger covering. The outfit was a huge success and Violet found herself knitting for the other men as well.

Like the other husbands, Fred is justifiably proud of his wife's achievements. "When I tell him what we've been doing on the site, he'll say, "That's not women's work". Then we both laugh and next day all of us housewives carry on as usual," said Violet, smiling.

Her son, Andrew, helped at the site too, and daughter Linda had made a neat purple and orange embroidered hassock, one of two hundred the ladies are sewing for the church. "All our families have been involved with the project. Even the babies and toddlers, as they're brought along to the site so that their mums can do some work," said Violet.

The ladies' final task, apart from their continuous fund-raising efforts, is to lay glass mosaic on the floor of the altar dais and church entrance. "After it's all finished we'll have loads of our own decorating and gardening to do," said Violet. "We've not had a minute to look after our own homes." After 6 years construction the new building was opened in 1973, the existing dual use building becoming simply St. Margarets Hall.

MONDAY 31st JULY 2017



St Peter's and St Paul's, Great Birch

There is very little history regarding this place on the net so here is what I could find. The 170 year old Grade II-listed St Peter and St Paul's church in Birch, near Colchester, which closed in 1990, it has stood empty for almost 25 years and has fallen into disrepair.

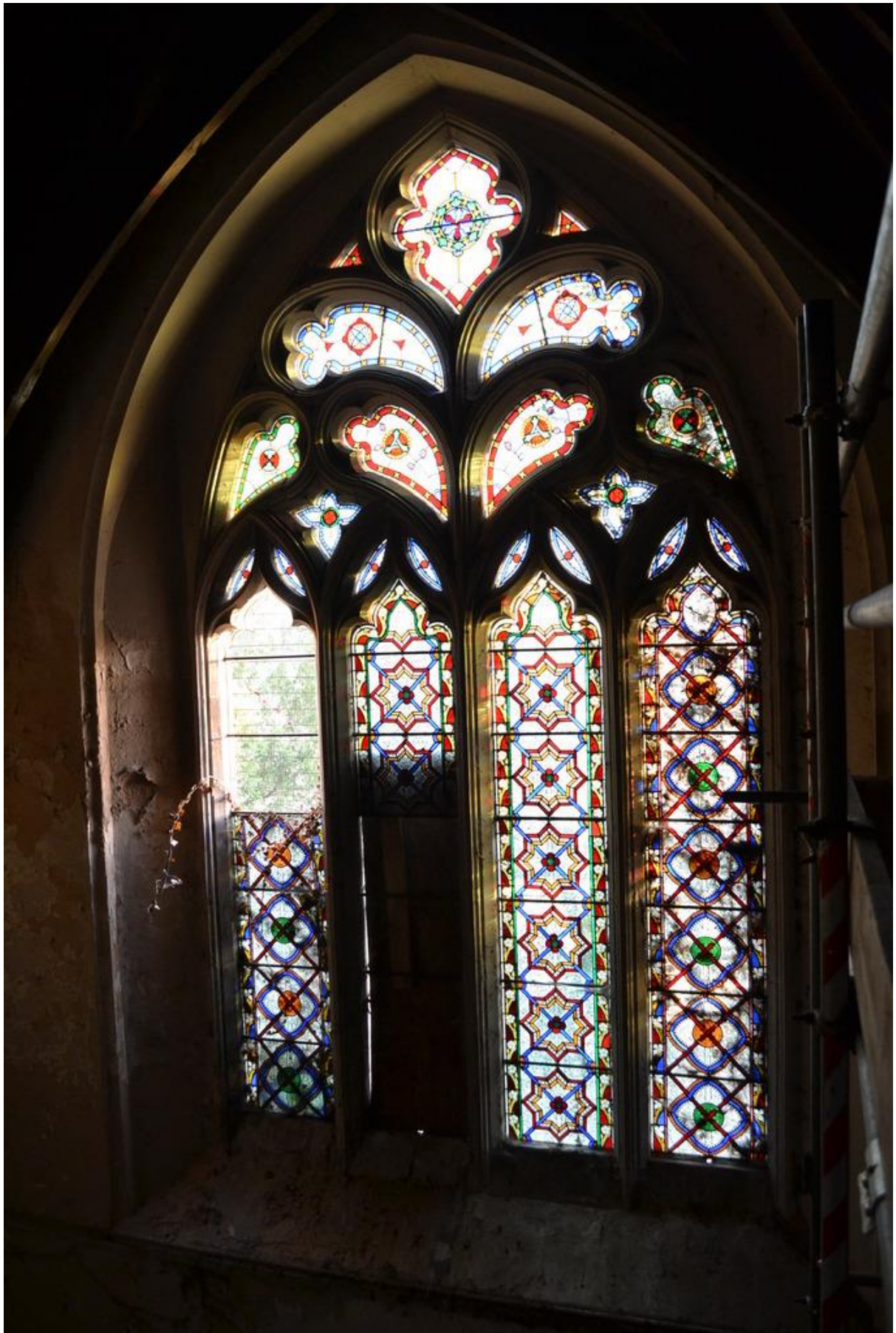
The Diocese of Chelmsford, which looks after the Church of England's affairs in Essex, says it has been unable to find a suitable alternative use for the historic building in that time. Regrettably, despite having found a willing buyer for the church who is prepared to spend £1,200,000 restoring this iconic landmark, the Church Commissioners in consultation with the Diocese of Chelmsford, have decided to proceed with their plans to demolish. In our opinion, this is unnecessary destruction of local heritage. The resultant harm will not only be in the loss of this Grade II listed building but also the detrimental impact of the loss on the Birch Conservation Area and the surrounding landscape.

I first became made aware of the church many months ago by another exploring companion who had spotted it but been told to go away by a local lady. Well on our way to somewhere else I suddenly remembered this and we ended up taking a detour. Especially as it's always good to do something new rather than a re-explore. It was still daylight as we got there and began to explore the external of the building to find a way in. The place is surrounded by a corrugated steel fence supported by scaffolding poles. Although it was easy to climb over the gap between the fence and the church was full of stingers and sharp thorn bushes with no real way through and into the church.

We then changed tactics and tried another way. This was more than successful and albeit a little sketchy and dangerous, we managed to crawl in lol. Wow, our first church. It was a little worse for wear inside with scaffolding holding up the roof and various rotten holes in the floor. You can tell by how rotten it is inside why the powers that be want it pulled down. However, as rotten as it is its still beautiful inside and worth and explore. We climbed the various bits of scaffolding and had a general wander round inside. We found a few prayer books, hymn books and song sheets scattered around. It's a shame that the benches and alter have been taken apart but I'm sure they will be used elsewhere.

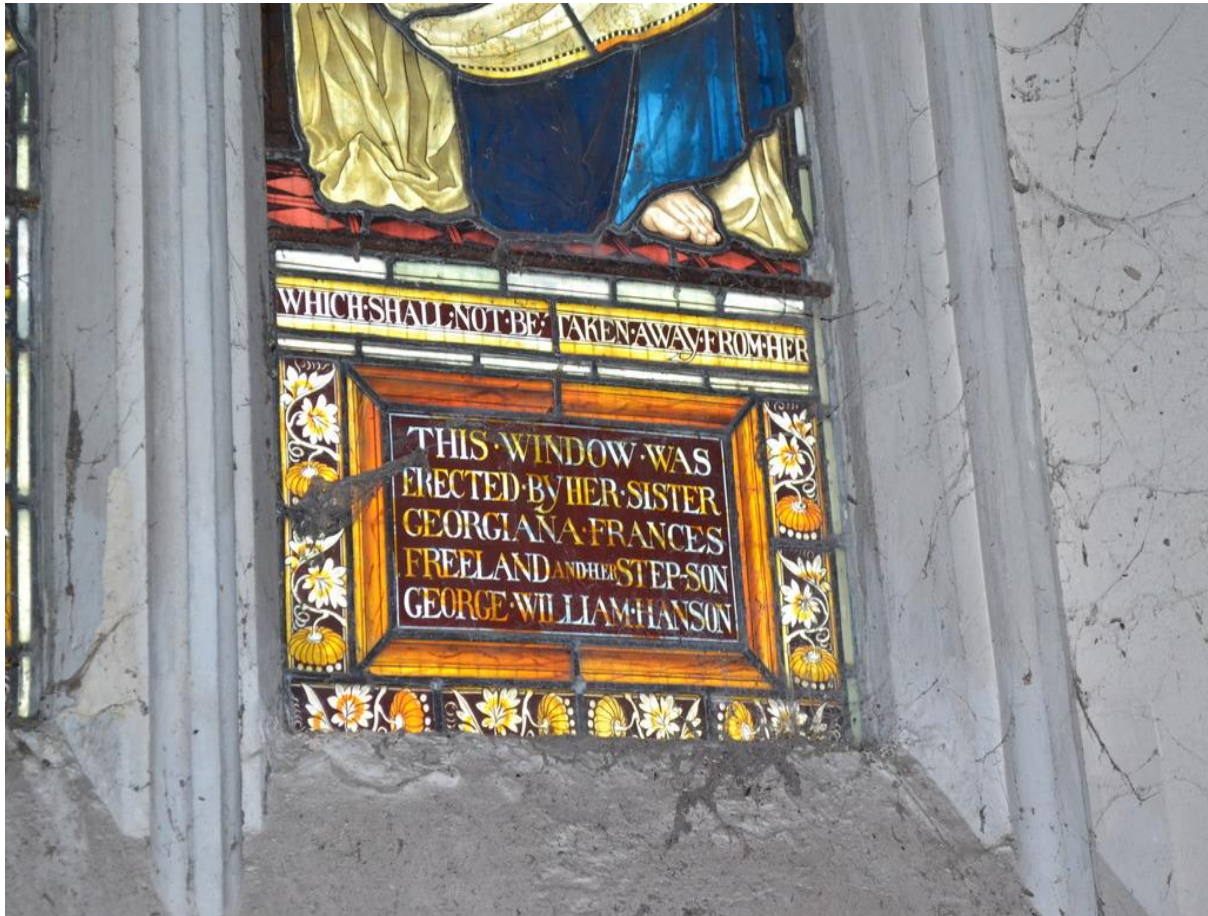
The windows that hadn't been broken were still amazing and I'm sure you will agree that it will be a crying shame to tear it down.

















Old photos inside Birch Church

Campaigners fear a 170-year-old church will be demolished despite there being a viable scheme to save it. The Grade II-listed St Peter and St Paul's church in Birch, near Colchester, which closed in 1990, has stood empty for almost 25 years and has fallen into disrepair.

The Diocese of Chelmsford, which looks after the Church of England's affairs in Essex, says it has been unable to find a suitable alternative use for the historic building in that time. Now Church Commissioners have earmarked it for demolition, a decision that has to be rubber stamped by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government before it can go ahead. But Heritage groups, such as The Victorian Society and the Colchester and North East Essex Building Preservation Trust, say church bosses should reconsider their decision in the light of potential new customers - Gary Cottee and his family - coming forward, who want to restore and convert it into a home.

According to Mr Cottee, a local builder, his designs involve removing the southern aisle of the church but keeping the spire and main facades in place. He says the vast majority of people in the village are supportive of his plans.

"There are some people who only want to see a church used for its original purposes but most people understand the landmark can only be preserved by finding an alternative use," he said. "I would like to restore the building for my family to live in and not for profit to sell on." However, Church Commissioners have decided this current plan is not "viable or sustainable" - a view that has angered conservation groups. "We are mystified at the decision of the Church Commissioners to press ahead with the demolition of St Peter's, a beautiful and nationally important building when there is now a viable scheme for its preservation," said Tom Ashley, a churches conservation adviser at the Victorian Society.

A spokesman for the Chelmsford Diocese said the organisation supported the demolition plans and added: "St Peter's church building in Birch has been closed and not used for worship for nearly 25 years. During this time Chelmsford Diocese has consulted with interested parties such as local councils and other representative organisations and invited them to make suggestions as to how the building might be used. However, in spite of several major efforts, a suitable alternative has not been found." She added: "The Closed Churches Committee of the Church Commissioners decided that the recent proposals to convert the building into a home were not financially viable or sustainable, and would have led to a further lengthy period of uncertainty about the future of the church.

MONDAY 7th AUGUST 2017



St Michael's, Berechurch Hall Road, Colchester







All Saints, Shrub End Road, Colchester

Having covered this church in detail before in Book 8, there is little to say this time but this is the church that I was baptised in, my brother was married in and the one I attend and am the treasurer for.



St Matthew's, Harwich Road, Colchester

They are a warm and friendly group of people that welcomes people of all ages and all walks of life. We seek to serve people from the local area through Sunday services, a variety of events and partnerships with others in the community. We are one of three churches in the Greenstead with St Anne Ministry Team in North East Colchester.



Wycliffe Baptist, Parsons Heath, Colchester



Evangelical Free, Magnolia Drive, Colchester



Elim Pentecostal, Clematis Way, Colchester

History tells us that Colchester's Elim Pentecostal congregation formed in 1930. A temporary tabernacle was built in Fairfax Road in 1931 and served until 1957, when the congregation moved to the former Strict Baptist Chapel in Stanwell Street. When that chapel was demolished in 1971 to make way for a new road, the congregation had a new church built in Walsingham Road. The congregation now meets in a newer building on Clematis Way.



St Andrew's, Forest Road, Colchester

This is a Grade C small building of around about 12th century for the west part of the North wall of the nave. There was much rebuilding done to it in the 18th century. The West tower has bricks from the 16th century



St Mary's, High Street, Wivenhoe

This is a middle of the road Church of England with a diverse range of services and a great musical tradition and it is located in the old part of Wivenhoe.



Wivenhoe Methodist, The Avenue, Wivenhoe

During the early years of the 19th century the followers of John Wesley, known as “Methodists”, split into two rival groups, the established “Wesleyan Methodists” and the breakaway “Primitive Methodists”. Both groups became established in Colchester and competed to extend their influence in the surrounding area. In many places these Methodists had no building of their own but conducted services in private houses, hired rooms, or in the open air. Both groups were active in Wivenhoe in the late 1830’s. But while the Wesleyans soon withdrew, the Primitive Methodists persevered for several decades.

Towards the end of 1870 the Primitives looked set to buy land and build a chapel. But at the last moment the Wesleyans returned to the village and quickly won what can be seen as a race to build. Despite a muddle over the purchase of the land, the whole project was completed in just seven weeks. What emerged was a wooden-boarded building, situated on the bend in Chapel Road, with seating for 162 and opened in February 1871 (see drawing right, by Geoffrey King). The Wesleyans were now safely established in the village after making very little effort during the preceding 30 years. The Primitives, who had done so much groundwork, withdrew defeated.

Within 10 years there were complaints of overcrowding and discomfort and agitation to build a bigger chapel. Two adjacent plots of land at the junction of Chapel Road and Clifton Terrace were purchased and plans prepared, but no further action taken for over 15 years. Meanwhile the original building survived the 1884 earthquake unscathed.

The project was revived in 1897. Several alternative sites were now considered and rejected. New plans were drawn up for the land in Chapel Road, before the present site in The Avenue became available. Again plans were prepared but builders’ tenders were 40-60% above the architect’s estimate. Further delay ensued while one of the Trustees prepared a simpler specification and undertook to build at a cheaper price. There was also a ceremonial stone-laying on Whit Monday 1901 at which contemporary documents and newspapers were buried in the foundations. The new chapel was finally opened in October 1901. Despite initial optimism, it took 25 years to pay off the debt on this new building.

The Chapel Road land and building were eventually sold, the old chapel becoming first the Parish Hall and later the St. John Ambulance Hall, its external appearance much changed in recent times. At the national level, the rival Wesleyan and Primitive Methodist factions finally re-united in 1932. Electric lighting was installed in The Avenue chapel in 1928 to replace the gas, while 1938 brought electric heating instead of the stove. Otherwise the building changed little in 60 years. After a period of relative prosperity the membership dwindled until in 1959 a proposal to close was narrowly defeated.

Then in the early 1960's the life of the church was revived by the arrival of a number of new young families. Soon there was interest in renovating the premises. A modest scheme proposed in 1966 was overtaken by the receipt of a bequest which facilitated a more ambitious project completed in 1971. New rooms were built at the rear and the interior of the church was turned round so that the congregation faced west instead of east. New chairs replaced the pews and the exterior red brickwork was rendered over and painted. Two years later a small pipe organ was installed. Recent modifications have improved facilities for the disabled. In 2001 the church celebrated the centenary of the present building in The Avenue and continues to serve the local community.



Wivenhoe Congregational, High Street, Wivenhoe

Sunday worship is held at 11am, with a communion on the first Sunday each month and there are numerous activities there during the week which include a pre-school group, the Gilbert & Sullivan Society, Touchstones Dance Club, the Brownies, Rainbows and on the first and third Tuesday each month it is the Sisterhood.



St Monica's, Devere Lane, Wivenhoe

The Catholic parish of Brightlingsea-with-Wivenhoe is a growing community with churches in both towns - St Sabina and St Monica. It also includes the villages of Ainger's Green, Alresford, Elmstead Market, Frating, Gt Bentley and Thorrington.