

Some notes on the history of All Saints, East Hanningfield, as written by my mother and father, Dora and Audley Desmond Ost, in around 1960 – redrafted from a photocopy of the original typescript, February 2015.

P. Ost.

Old All Saints. East Hanningfield

The village is of Saxon Foundation; the name means *Hanna's peoples' field* with field having the meaning of *veldt*, open space or country. The group of East South and West Hanningfield was settled long before the Norman Conquest.

The Manor of Claydons is mentioned in the Domesday Book.

The earliest record of a church here is an entry in 1263. The name of the first known rector is Jordan de Muckayne and after his time a fairly complete list of Rectors to the present day is held at the church. The Old Church which stood by East Hanningfield Hall was 12th Century in main with an added Tudor North side. There is no record to show when or how built. There was a brass on the Chancel floor in memory of a Lincoln Inn bencher. This was stolen shortly before the ruin was demolished in 1960. The 12th Century piscina was removed to the Colchester and Essex Museum.

In the beginning of the 19th Century the Church records show that the Rector and Churchwardens (Rector John Nottige) were worried by conditions at the church. A well-known Baddow surveyor (Webb) was called in to examine and plan renovations. All pews were made free, and wood used from "box Pews" to panel the church. The roof was removed, and the walls raised, and a new roof made. The bells were overhauled and two re-cast. To do all this work costing £750 the parish (as legal practice then was) voted church rate sufficient to pay off cost of repairs within ten years. A large heating stove of the latest pattern was placed in the North Aisle with a cast iron flue pipe which went through the roof (as still can be seen in West Hanningfield Church). This pipe was the cause of the disastrous fire in 1883.

Rev. Buxton- Smythe had retired. His successor Canon Fowler was instituted December 22nd and due to be inducted on 3rd January 1884. Canon Fowler was to preach on Sunday, December 31st 1883 and the church was heated for Evensong. About dinner time smoke was noticed from the roof of the church and when the villagers rushed to the scene, they realised little could be done as all nearby water was frozen. Some furnishing and books were rescued; the safe was abandoned as impossible to reach (this contained records and Communion Vessels). The fire spread rapidly in the roof and roared like a blast furnace up

the belfry. The heat was so great that the bells melted and fell as a shower of molten metal in the west end of the church. Thus, a well repaired, comfortable church had been reduced to a shell in a few hours.

Even the timber porch outside was burnt. When Canon Fowler was inducted, he had to perform the customary rapping for admission on a non-existent door. As soon as the ashes were cool enough the schoolchildren sorted through the ashes and saved the bell metal. The heat of the fire removed fourteen coats of whitewash to reveal mediaeval wall paintings, which were transferred to the Victoria and Albert Museum, where they may now be seen.

As the insurance on the church was most inadequate - only £1000 - money had to be raised for rebuilding. Meanwhile, parishioners met for worship either in the great barn of East Hanningfield Hall (burnt down in 1937) or in the Rectory coach house. Some people were in favour of rebuilding on the original site, but many thought it best to build a completely new church more in the centre of the village as this would be more easily reached by children and the aged of the parish.

A retired woollen merchant from Bradford, Mr. Elijah Slater, offered the Rector a site on the meadow alongside Rough Hill Farmhouse. Mr. Stone was the architect finally chosen after several designs had been turned down. William Wood of London was the builder. The church is built with brick core rendered inside with lime set plaster, faced with stone at the corners and outside stone and flint rendered with a timber steeple. The Whitechapel London Bell Foundry (Mears and Stainbank) (still in existence in 2015), recast the bells they had made in 1843 for the old church, using the salvaged metal.

Mr. Wood was instructed to make all frames and roof trusses on the site from approved timber to ensure good workmanship. When the roof was due to be framed the Architect was on holiday and the builder tried to bring in ready-made 'below- standard' roof arches (to increase his profit) but Mr. Stone returned unexpectedly and found the arches in the churchyard. The result nearly bankrupted Wm. Wood.

The tower was completed with cleft oak shingles on March 29th 1885. On March 29th 1949 (64 years to the day) Messrs Bakers of Danbury completed stripping them ready for re-shingling the tower. The shingles failed because they had been fixed with alloy nails which corroded and split the shingles; and the shingles began to fall about 1935.

The present oak shingles were saturated in an oil soluble copper compound which is estimated to double their life, held secured with copper nails. The

Rector and churchwardens (John Ratcliff and Benjamin Gardiner) were determined that the disaster of the fire should not be repeated and there was installed a low pressure hot water heating system which served in original form until 1944 , and now has a new boiler, chimney and some additional radiators.

The dedication of the Church is the same as the old: "All Saints ". It was consecrated by the Bishop of St. Albans (Bishop Clayton) in August 1885. The new Church had cost £ 5,000. The new churchyard was taken into use at once, but only the part to the east of the church was consecrated for burials - the idea was to have lawns and flower beds around the church.

Some burials still continued in the old church yard and for funerals the chancel was roofed in, and windows re-glazed. No services, other than funerals, were ever held again at the old church.

Canon Fowler who had been the mainspring of the rebuilding work went on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, and died (in 1893) at San Merino in Italy as a result of typhoid caught from drinking infected water at Jacob's Well in Samaria. The people using Jacob's Well seemed to have acquired some immunity against this infection, but visitors were unprotected in any way.

New All Saints Church, East Hanningfield

Porch

In early days a font often stood outside the church near the main door, but as it became the custom to christen babies when they were only a few days old, most churches created a porch which served two purposes: to protect the font and congregation at the baptism, and to provide a meeting place before and after services. Our church porch was of course built at the same time as the Church, and the font has always been inside the church.

Notice Board

This is required by law as all important notices of elections and public matters must be fastened to the church door or notice board in the church. Our law givers obviously expect everyone to attend church and so see the notices.

Font

This is just inside the door and there to remind you. that you enter the Church of God by baptism just as you enter his house by a door. The Carvings on the font are symbols of kinds of Baptism:

Noah being saved from the flood

The Dove or Holy Spirit coming down upon Jesus at his Baptism

The Font is made of stone lined with lead, and after use the water used is allowed to drain away. Fresh water is consecrated (made holy) for each baptism service.

West Window

Four medallions of the symbols of the Evangelists, St Matthew (ANGEL), St Mark (LION), St John (OX) and St Luke (EAGLE), the writers of the four gospels. This glass was originally in the east window but was moved when the present east window was given to the church in 1898 by Hardy.

Bells

The ropes have a coloured "sally" (from the catkins of the "sally or sallow willow" which is wool woven into the bell rope to prevent the ringer's hands being cut by the friction. The bells are hung in a metal frame in the tower (belfry from bell-frame) They can swing in a complete circle and rope passes over a very large wooden wheel grooved to guide the rope. When the bells are chimed, they are just swung until they sound, but when rung, are pulled mouth upwards' until they rest on a back stay that prevents them going full circle. Each time a bell rope is pulled the bell swings almost upright and then back to rest. This ringing position gives a much clearer tone.

The bells all have names and their weights are carved on them and there is room for a fourth bell to be hung with the three already there.

Roof

The roof is framed together by exposed trussed beam work; this is a reminder from the past. Then most churches, and large houses too, were open like barns from floor to roof. Only a few City churches have plaster ceilings; those built in the 17th and 18th Centuries.

Windows

On the South side is a stained-glass window showing the Annunciation - the angel Gabriel's visit to Mary - It is the gift of the parishioners in memory of Queen Victoria's death in 1902. On the north side the window illustrates the parable of the Sower. It was placed in the church in memory of M. Sacre, a brother of a former rector.

Transepts

These were built for the special use of the boys and girls of East Hanningfield Primary School. About 100 pupils were expected to sit there: the boys on the north, the girls on the south side. The Headmaster, Mr. Picking, was the organist and old parishioners will tell that non-attendance or bad behaviour on Sunday meant the cane on Monday.

Chancel Arch

"Finials " (carved tops of columns) represent a bishop and a king, symbolising Church and state or sacred and secular. Two steps from the nave to the chancel are simply for the purpose of raising the minister and choir to where they can be seen by all in church. In older churches there is sometimes a slope instead; steps were introduced as copies of Italian churches where there were vaults containing sacred relics under the chancel. The Arch itself is sometimes spanned by a wooden screen called a ROOD SCREEN , This name comes from the large cross or crucifix which in pre-reformation times stood on the beam across the Chancel Arch (see Ranworth Church in Norfolk) This beam called the rood beam was wide enough to allow a person to walk along to read the epistle and gospel from the foot of the Cross during Holy Week and other festivals. In many churches you will see either on the North or South side a doorway in the chancel arch. If the doorway is open or unblocked you will see a flight of stairs to the Rood Beam.

In olden times the chancel was cut off completely from the nave, which sometimes was used for markets and meetings. This church, being built after such practices had ceased, had no need for a screen. Churches are now being built called dual purpose churches which again can be divided at the Chancel steps, and used for other meetings, concerts etc.

Chancel

Pews for the choir are called stalls, and in most old churches they are much older than the seating for the congregation. In the Chancel of our church are memorials to Canon Fowler and Canon Sacre.

Communion Rail

This is a convenience to people kneeling to receive Holy Communion. In former times the rail was much more solid and closely paled and formed a fence to prevent dogs and other straying animals from soiling the Communion table. The steps at the Communion rail are again for kneeling and an additional step to the table, so that the minister can be seen by everyone as he says the Holy Communion Service and gives Blessing at the close of Morning and Evening Prayer. Here are chairs for visiting Bishops etc.

Lectern

This is the name of the reading desk. Henry VIII ordered one to be placed in each parish church with the Bible in English.

Prayer Desk

This is the Rector's place in the chancel for prayers announcements, reading of Banns etc.

Pulpit

This is high so that the voice of the preacher will carry. Some pulpits have wooden sounding boards; common devices for throwing the voice forward in a high building or out of doors.

Communion Table.

This is made of wood and free standing. It must by law be able to be moved, so that it is not confused with an altar containing relics of saints upon which sacrifices are made, as in Rome. The service at the Communion table is a remembrance of Jesus and a shared meal by his followers in repetition of the Last Supper with His Disciples.

Candles

These remind us that the early church had to meet in secret and by night, also that Jesus said "I am the Light of the World". The Cross, made like the candlesticks of brass is a cross, and not a crucifix. The portrayal by image is forbidden as idolatrous i.e. a figure of Christ on the Cross might be worshipped by ignorant people. The stones on the Cross are agates and cornelians - semi-precious stones. Left of the Chancel is a small recess called a credence for the Communion Bread and Wine. The Offertory plate which stands in the window above is the "decent basin" ordered by the Prayer Book to receive alms or gifts.

The windows in the chancel represent our Lord as the "Bread of Life and the True Vine".

The East Window

The East Window shows a Crucifixion Scene with figures of Christ upon the Cross; Mary His mother, Mary Cleophas, Mary Magdalene at the foot of the Cross, St. John and the Centurian.

In this window, our Lord's mother wears a wedding ring, an unusual detail not seen in most pictures of her.

Organ

The organ has two manuals and was installed in 1890 by Betterton. The electric

blower was installed in 1953.

Vestry

This word means a robing or dressing room There are cupboards for the robes of the choir and clergy.

Safes

These hold the Church and parish records and the Communion Vessels. The large safe with the records has deep pits on the surface, the result of the fire at the old church and subsequent exposure to the weather while the new church was being built. All the contents were undamaged and safe and, contents were transferred to the new church. The smaller safe in the east wall of the vestry was installed for the Communion vessels. (Note: the cup which was made for the old church by London silversmiths between 1585 and 1620). Other plate was presented by the Nottige family and bears their coat of arms. "Decent basin" forerunner of the alms dish, is probably the original vessel supplied for Church use at the Reformation. Hammered into the bottom is a picture of a pelican feeding young by drawing blood from her own breast. To mediaeval artists the pelican was a symbol of pious almsgiving. This dish has been recorded by the Church Preservation Society.

Records

The earliest register is dated 1538 the year that Thomas Cromwell ordered records of baptisms, marriages and deaths to be kept. It is on vellum and is a copy of the original, which was made to comply with the order, but which was found to be not permanent (fading). The churchwardens were ordered to see that a permanent record be made, and it has been maintained from that day to this.

The present, marriage register dates from 1836 when present form of detail was first required by law.

The accounts go back to the 18th century. In 1641 is an account of the Common Parliament, held in the old Church to protest against the taxes levied by Charles 1, notably Ship Money.

There is a record of the digging of the well in the Rectory yard in 1792. The well is 475 feet deep. There is the record of the discussion about and the restoration of the old church and rebuilding plans after the fire.

There are certificates of burial in woollen.

School records.

Terrier of church lands.