

This report has been produced as a key resource in the management of the church of St. Peter and St. Paul, Ash.

As custodians of the building for today's Church and for future generations your PCC will want to know that its decisions are based on the best possible understanding of the significance of the building in your care. It is hoped that your PCC will always refer to this report when assessing the priorities of repairs highlighted in the quinquennial inspection and when considering possible alterations to the structure of the building or the internal layout.

A copy of the report is kept by your diocese and will be referred to when advice is sought from your DAC.

SITE NAME/DEDICATION: ASH / ST. PETER & ST. PAUL
COUNTY / DISTRICT I PARISH: KENT / SEVENOAKES
NAR NO: SMR NO: NGR: TQ602646
LISTED BUILDING GRADE: ONE
TYPE/PERIOD/ FORM:
ARCHDECONARY: ROCHESTER

LOCATION:

The church is situated on the north side of the village of Ash and south of New Ash Green. It stands alone except that on the east adjacent to the churchyard is Ash Manor, a substantial red brick house of three stories built by Sir Edmund Fowler and dated 1637. The church stands on the North Downs on the Upper Chalk at c. 140 metres above O.D.

SIGNIFICANCE:

The church is important for the 13th century work preserved in the chancel and Tower, the scope, quality and detail of the late medieval work and also the reordering of c.1900 by T. G. Jackson.

DESCRIPTION:

The church consists of Chancel, North Chapel, South Vestry, Nave, North and South Aisles, West Tower and South Porch.

The earliest surviving fabric is of the 13th century and consists of the chancel and the two lower stages of the west tower and it is likely that that are contemporary. The disposition of these two elements also defines the length and possibly the width of the 13 century nave, which was largely rebuilt in the later Middle Ages.

Phase 1:

The chancel was originally unbuttressed and is of two bays defined by interior arcading. The side walls of the eastern bay have blind arches that framed lancet windows, that or the north remains open but the southern lancet has been blocked, perhaps in the early 19th century when two large wall tablets were mounted in front of it (see below). The western bay has an open arch on the north side indicating that there was a chapel north of the chancel at that time. The arch on the south appears to have always been blind.

The east window has a pointed head with a hollow moulded hood and three cinquefoiled lights. The mullions run through and the tracery is in perpendicular style. The window was replaced in

1863 but the rear arch appears to be medieval, perhaps of the 14th century. The blind arches in the east bay are pointed with continuous plain chamfers and roll and chamfered hood moulds. The lancet on the north has a pointed head with label and plain chamfered jambs. The rear arch is also pointed and has wide splayed jambs and a flat cill. On the south only half of the external outline of the window can be seen (the rest is masked by the east wall of the vestry) but it is likely that the window matched that on the north. The arch to the north chapel is also pointed and consists of a single plain chamfered order. The section of the imposts is square with a hollow below. Each impost is supported on a pair of brackets also square with a hollow moulding below. Responds are square. The arch opposite is pointed and consists of a single rectangular order. The imposts are square with a plain chamfer below. The detail suggests that this arch has always been blind.

The two lower stages of the west tower belong to the 13th century and appear to have been originally with out buttresses. Presumably the belfry of this period was dismantled when the present belfry was built in the 15th century. The 13th century walls have no horizontal division but on the north a lancet survives at both levels, the lower is blocked. On the west a lancet survives at the upper level and is also blocked. There are no windows of this period on the south but they were probably removed when the stair turret was built in the 15th century. The tower arch is pointed and consists of two plain chamfered orders. Imposts are square above and plain chamfered below. The responds are also chamfered and have convex stops with bars top and bottom. Plinths are plain chamfered.

Phase 2:

The north chapel was rebuilt in the early 14th century and to judge by the roof and the fenestration it overlapped the nave by one bay. There is also a change in the character of the flint work east and west of the central buttress of the north wall marking a division between the chapel and the later north aisle. Also the chapel has no plinth but the later aisle has a plain chamfered plinth. There are no traces of a contemporary aisle. It is also clear that the chapel is earlier than the north arcade as the rafters of the roof are lower than the apex of the adjacent arch and are carried on a short inserted wall-plate. The chapel has buttresses of two weathered stages, almost entirely rebuilt in brick and tile. The windows all have flowing tracery typical of the early 14th century. The east window has a segmental head and a roll moulded hood with head stops. Below are three graduated lights with trefoil ogee heads. Above the mullions form pointed arches containing flowing tracery with trefoils between. The rear arch has a scotarch with a sunk chamfer and a hood with head stops, plain splayed jambs and a flat cill with a projecting double chamfered front that continues as a string on each side of the window. The tracery has been replaced but there is no reason to doubt the form of the window. The windows in the north wall are a pair but that on the west has been entirely replaced in recent times. Each has a segmental head with a hood mould with plain stops below are two trefoiled ogee headed lights with simple flowing tracery. The rear arches are similar to that of the east window.

A great deal of work was carried out in the 15th century. The nave was entirely remodelled. The way the north chapel relates to the north arcade suggests that the arcades were cut through existing walls (see above), but the effect of the new work was almost total. The nave arcades and the chancel arch look to be of c.1400 and the north and south aisles, the remodelling of the tower and the south porch somewhat later but it is difficult to separate the reconstruction of the nave and the building of the aisles. Thus the work may be all of one period, possibly of 1472 the date of a bequest towards the "repair of the nave". The work in the nave will be described first.

Phase 3:

The chancel arch is wide and tall and no doubt replaced a smaller opening. The arch is pointed and of two hollow chamfered orders. The responds are semi-octagonal and have hollow and wave moulded capitals and wave moulded bases on square plinths. The north and south arcades are matching and each consists of three equal arches carried on slender octagonal piers. The details

match those of the chancel arch. The roof is contemporary (see below) and there are two small rectangular windows in the east gable level with the apex of the chancel roof, very plain and therefore difficult to date.

The north aisle is the same width as the north chapel, but the chapel appears to have been shortened at this time, the west bay being incorporated within the aisle. There is the base of a 15th century timber screen in line with the east wall of the nave that presumably marks east end of the new aisle. The walls are faced in flint and have buttresses of two weathered stages repaired with brick and tile. There are two matching windows one on the north and the other at the west. Each has a pointed head with a roll and hollow moulded label with plain stops. Both have two cinquefoiled lights with pointed heads and tracery that consists of two trefoiled sub-lights between vertical mullions. The rear arches have simple pointed heads with a hollow chamfer, plain splayed jambs and flat cills. The north door has a pointed head with a roll and hollow moulded hood with plain horizontal stops. The moulding are continuous and consist of a hollow chamfer and a roll.

The south aisle is narrower than the north but the walls are a little thicker. They are faced in flint and have sandstone dressings. Buttresses are of two weathered stages and there is a bold plain chamfered plinth. The parapet stands on a bold hollow chamfered table course and has a continuous roll moulded capping. The windows on the south match those in the north aisle (see above). The west window is rectangular with a simple hood and a single cinquefoil light. The rear arch has a segmental head with a hollow chamfer and plain splayed jambs. The east window is internal, between the aisle and the later vestry. It is rectangular in form and consists of two cinquefoiled lights. The rear arch is similar to that of the west window. On the north side of the window is a stone bracket and to the south is a later doorway giving access to the vestry. There is a piscina at the east end of the south wall. It is very simple with a pointed head and plain chamfered aris. The south door has a pointed head with continuous double hollow mouldings that stand on hollow chamfered plinths. The rear arch is segmental and has plain jambs.

The west tower was also remodelled at this period. This work consisted of the rebuilding of the belfry, the addition of a large stair turret at the south-east corner and the insertion of a new west doorway and window framed by diagonal buttresses. The mouldings of the west doorway are very similar to those of the doorway of the north aisle.

The west doorway has a pointed head with a heavy hollow moulded hood and continuous mouldings consisting of a roll between two hollows. The rear arch has a segmental head and plain jambs. Above is a window with a pointed head and hood. There are two cinquefoiled lights with a quatrefoil between. The stonework is heavily eroded. The rear arch is pointed and has splayed jambs and a sloping cill. The belfry has openings on all four faces. They are rectangular and consist of two trefoiled lights under a rectangular hood. That on the south is partly blocked by the stair turret which suggests that the turret may be later than the belfry. The crenellated parapet stands on a hollow moulded string. The stair turret is semi-octagonal and rises in three set back stages to a level above the belfry parapet and gives access to the leads. It is also crenellated and is lit by four small rectangular windows. Inside the stair is circular, the lower part is made of stone but the upper part is timber. The stair turret and the belfry were original of stone and flint but both the south side of the belfry and the stair turret were subsequently faced in red brick. There is a peel of six bells, five of which date from the early 18th century. They all have cannons and are hung on timber headstocks. The bell frame is timber and is probably contemporary with the bells.

The details of the south porch match those of the aisle but large sections of the tablecourse are missing and the parapet has been extensively repaired in brick. The lower quoins and the chamfered plinth remain unaltered. The entrance arch has a pointed head and a heavy hollow moulded hood. The mouldings are continuous and consist of two hollow chamfers.

There is one other element of this period, the window in the south wall of the chancel framed by the western blind arch. It is now internal between the chancel and the later vestry. It matches the rectangular window of two lights in the east wall of the south aisle.

Roofs:

The steep pitched chancel roof is clad with plain clay tiles. The interior has a plaster ceiling in the form of a wagon vault.

The nave roof is also steep pitch and clad with plain clay tiles. The roof is divided into three bays by tie beams with wall-posts and solid curved brackets pierced by trefoils and supported on plain stone corbels. The tie beams are moulded with a roll between hollow chamfers and carry octagonal crown posts with moulded caps and plain chamfered bases. Above are four way curved braces, the longitudinal pair joined to the collar purlin. A plaster ceiling in the form of a wagon vault obscures the remainder of the roof. The roof appears to be contemporary with the remodelling of the nave in the 15th century.

The roofs over the north aisle and chapel are of simple lean to construction. The chapel roof overlaps the nave by one bay at the east and the upper ends of the joists are set slightly lower than those of the aisle roof and the boarding has been raised to line up with that of the aisle. Both roofs are made up of closely spaced rafters and are clad with lead.

The south aisle roof is also of lean to construction but it is divided into three bays by principal rafters with small curved brackets and wall posts carried on plain stone corbels. A simple design that matches the nave roof. The roof covering is hidden behind the parapet but is presumably lead.

Restorations:

The first major phase of restoration was the facing of the belfry and stair turret in red brick presumably in 18th or early 19th century. The tower was also strengthened with iron straps and tie-bars. The chancel paving and the bow fronted chancel step belong to the early 18th century. The church was also refitted in the 1790s and the tile floor of the nave belongs to this time. The east window of the chancel was replaced in c.1860 and the vestry was added at sometime in the second half of the 19th century. There is a good sketch of the church in the vestry. It is dated 1850 and shows the whole of the south wall of the chancel. Sir Thomas Graham Jackson (a native of Sevenoaks) carried out a second major restoration in c.1900. His work on the fabric was very restrained and probably includes the brick buttresses at the east end of the chancel and the repair of a number of other buttresses. His approach to the furnishings was much more radical and he completely refitted the interior. The altar rail, stalls, pulpit, lectern and pews are all his. The stalls are dated 1901 and are a memorial to Alice Mary Jackson. All are of high quality.

BUILDING MATERIALS (incl. old plaster, paintings, glass, tiles etc):

Roofs are finished with red plain clay tiles. External walls are faced in flint that still carries traces of white lime-mortar. Dressings are mostly of grey ragstone no doubt from the quarries a few miles to the south-east. But those of the south aisle and south porch are of sandstone from the Tonbridge area. There are areas of repair in red brick probably of the 18th century and these were also originally rendered. The interior is plastered and whitened with lime wash. There are some fragments of medieval stained glass in the east window of the south chapel.

EXCEPTIONAL FITTINGS IN CHURCH:

The furniture of c.1900 by T.G. Jackson is of high quality.

EXCEPTIONAL MONUMENTS IN CHURCH:

Brass: Richard Galon d.1465, half figure of a priest with an inscription below.

Wall monument: Dr. Maxfield d. 1605, painted male and female figures kneeling on each side of a prayer desk in an alabaster surround with foliage panels of considerable quality.

Pair of large white marble tablets to Thomas and Sophia Lambert of 1813 and signed by John Bacon Junior.

CHURCHYARD AND ENVIRONS:

Size: Large

Shape: Rectangular with a rectangular extension to the north and a large car park on the south.

Condition: The modern extension is well maintained.

Apparent extent of burials: Extensive.

Present status: Open for burial.

Maintained by parish/local authority: Parish.

Boundary walls: There are brick walls on the south and east adjacent to the Manor House. The other boundaries have hedges.

Buildings on the boundary: Ash Manor to the east.

Exceptional monuments: None.

Ecological potential: Limited by the present maintenance programme.

HISTORICAL RECORD (where known):

Earliest ref. to church:

Evidence of pre-Norman status (DB, DM, TR, etc.):

Late med. Status: Property of the Priory of St. John of Jerusalem.