

ST MARY'S CHURCH, KENARDINGTON

Diocese of Canterbury

INTRODUCTION

St Mary's Church lies on the outskirts of the small village of Kenardington, in a rural and beautiful location overlooking Romney Marsh. It acts as a visual beacon in the landscape, and lies on the route of the Saxon Shore Way, linked with nearby Warehorne Church.

The church is Grade II* listed and now comprises a nave with integral chancel, a west tower and south porch. However, the layout is unusual because a lightning strike in 1559 destroyed the original nave, chancel and north aisle of a much bigger church so the present nave we see today is in fact the main part of the earlier 13th century south aisle. Thus the original tower with its distinctive circular stair turret became separated from the church itself internally.

The exterior is mostly of Kentish ragstone, with Caen stone dressings to the doorways and windows and plain tiled roofs. Internally the spaces are simple, with exposed timbers in the nave and chancel ceilings.

THE LOCAL COMMUNITY AND ROLE OF THE CHURCH

The Vicar and PCC were keen to extend the role of this church to include facilities for retreats and musical events as well as to provide a resting place for walkers using the Saxon Shore Way which is immediately adjacent to the church.

However, due to its relatively isolated position, there was no electricity, water or drainage service to the building so these factors limited its potential for development. Services in the winter months were very challenging, as candlelight and portable electric generators provided the only source of heat and light. As the tower was cut off from the other interior parts of the church it was just used for the storage of gardening equipment. Vehicular access to the church was also very restricted.

St Mary's Church is part of a wide rural benefice comprising eight churches including the parishes of Aldington, Bilsington, Bonnington, Orlestone, Hamstreet, Ruckinge and Warehorne.



View of church from the south east before extension with new pentice visible on right



View of church from the north west before pentice extension added

THE PROJECT BRIEF

The PCC wanted to provide a meeting room, kitchen and accessible wc as well as improved storage and a new boiler room to enable the church to cater for community as well as religious events. It was not possible to achieve this within the existing building footprint as there are no aisles or transepts that could be adapted for such uses. It was therefore agreed that most of these facilities would be accommodated in a physically separate building.

There was also a requirement to find a way of linking the tower to the nave so that the tower could be incorporated into the overall space, rather than just being used as a separate storage space.

Another key aim was to provide a new heating system and lighting installation as there was no electricity or heating serving the church. A new drainage connection was also essential and complete internal redecoration was included under the overall project brief. Other issues such as ongoing damp problems in the tower also had to be addressed.

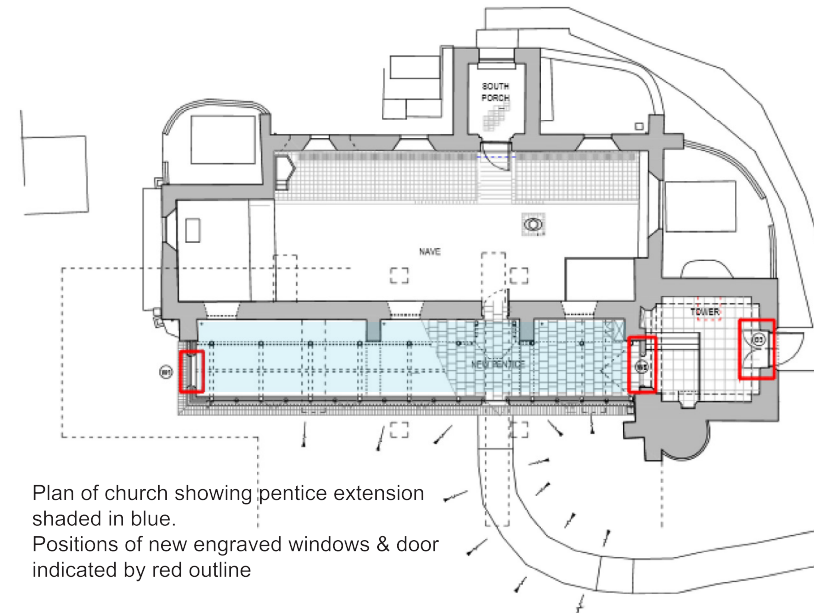
THE PROPOSALS

An existing doorway at the north side of the nave was unblocked to gain access to a new single storey oak framed 'pentice' in the approximate location of the original nave. This extension is designed as a modern building, with a brick plinth and pitched tiled roof and continuous glazing along the north wall. The stone east gable has a simple arched window with views of Warehorne church to the east.

The 'pentice' is also linked to the tower at the west end by opening up the original west archway which has also been reconfigured to provide a new arched window above the pentice roof. New steps within the tower provide access down from the west door into the pentice and a new glass door will be installed in the west doorway. An external ramp provides disabled access to a north door in the pentice whilst also directly linking to the services building.

This single storey timber framed building accommodates a full catering kitchen, boiler room, three WCs and a garden store and is located to the west of the church. The simple structure is clad in oak boarding with an oak shingled roof.

Heating is provided by an oil fired boiler which serves a combination of proprietary 'Jupiter' underfloor heating and ducted perimeter heating in the nave, with standard underfloor heating only in the pentice and tower. Within the nave a new lighting system has been installed using simple modern LED spotlight fittings at wall plate level and the entire building redecorated. Visually the striking simple interior of the nave and chancel has been carefully retained.



Plan of church showing pentice extension shaded in blue.
Positions of new engraved windows & door indicated by red outline



View of church with new 'pentice' extension

OBTAINING PERMISSIONS AND TIME LINE

The PCC had first approached the DAC and their architects in 2009 but it was not until early 2012 that planning approval was finally granted. Obtaining the DAC Faculty, Building Regulations approval and the tender process took a further year. This whole process involved lengthy and complex consultations with Historic England, SPAB, Ashford Borough Council as well as the DAC and Canterbury Archaeological Trust.

The building contract for the works was from Spring 2013 until Autumn 2013. Generally the contract ran smoothly due to the careful preparatory work that had been undertaken before. Preliminary archaeological investigations were a condition of the Faculty approval to allow for the remains of the original arcade to the nave to be excavated before the contract works could start.

A significant delay occurred with the electricity installation, due to the proximity of a badger set to the new connection point and subsequent re-routing of the service with the result that the church was not finally connected up to the national grid until almost a year after the completion of the building works.

One integral aim of the project was the installation of three engraved glass panels to mark the life of St Mary, to whom the church is dedicated. These will be placed in the new glazed west door, the east archway of the tower and the east window in the new pentice. However, the difficulties in selecting an artist, gaining approval and commissioning the designs has meant that temporary glazing had to be installed to allow the church to be re-opened.

PROJECT COSTS, FUNDRAISING AND GRANT AID

The total building contract cost of the reordering and extension project was £700,000 of which the services building cost around £150,000. The total project cost including professional and local authority fees amounted to approx £850,000.

The project was generously funded by a sole local benefactor, Michael Uren KBE, who had a particular personal vision for the future of the church.

PROJECT TEAM

Architect:	Purcell
Structural Engineer:	The Morton Partnership
Services Engineer:	PCS Limited
Archaeology:	Canterbury Archaeological Trust
Main Contractor:	B W May Ltd



View of nave and tower from the east with new pentice



Services building (above)

Interior view of pentice looking east (left)

PROJECT REVIEW

Has the completed scheme achieved the objectives of the brief?

Yes, we now have a warm church with all facilities whilst we haven't destroyed the ambience of the ancient church.

Have new uses for the church been generated?

The first series of Saxon Shore Early Music concerts have been held in the church this year and another series is planned for next year.

Recently it was possible to have a baptism service followed by a meal in the pentice and we can now offer refreshments after weddings and funeral services. We hoped to hold retreats in the church but there is much competition at present; however, the whole project has generated much interest and the church will be open for refreshments when the Saxon Shore Line charity walk takes place.

Has the congregation changed/increased/decreased?

We have seen a small but encouraging increase in the number of young families attending church and are now planning to start a Sunday school.

Were there any unexpected conflicts between church and community?

We were apprehensive about the impact of the building works on the community but there was a lot of support and once the work was completed, and the graveyard has been tidied up by local residents.

Is the project sustainable in the long term?

Yes, because the benefactor has purchased Glebe House and this has been refurbished so the rental income will be an endowment for the maintenance of the church buildings.

Does the PCC have any future plans?

We have now selected an artist, Alison Kinnaird, to provide designs for a tripartite of engraved glass windows to reflect the life of Mary, to whom the church is dedicated. These will be located in the west doorway, the east window of the tower and culminate in the east window of the pentice.

Best Piece of Advice

It is important to be aware of Ecclesiastical and Statutory procedures and to ensure that all permissions have been granted before work commences on site.

Parish website details and contact

Parish office: 01233 732274

Church plan courtesy of Purcell; photographs Julian Guffogg (page 1) & Elaine Wren



Pentice in use during a concert interval



Interior of tower looking towards pentice - engraved glass to be installed in upper archway



Nave in use during a concert



Reopened doorway from pentice to nave