

Introduction

Since my guides to Suffolk churches were published in the late 1980s and early 1990s they have been kindly received, but are now out of print and keenly sought after. I was therefore more than happy to accept my publisher's suggestion that they should be re-issued in a revised single-volume edition. It was not practicable, unfortunately, to revisit every church, but many have been seen again, and every effort has been made to mark significant changes. Where the word 'recent' occurs in a description it should be remembered that it may refer to the 1980s rather than the present century. It is notable that many of Suffolk's churches are now being used for a variety of community purposes and have installed kitchen, cloakroom and cloakroom facilities, either within the building or as an adjunct. Such developments are only noted in those cases where they have a decisive impact on the character of the building. With the invaluable help of George Pipe I have taken the opportunity to include brief details of all the ringable bells in the county, and in those cases where bells stand on the church floor their inscriptions are recorded; on the other hand silver is not listed because I have confined myself to those things which can normally be seen by the average visitor.

The churches of Suffolk are among its abiding treasures, and to study them all in depth demands a lifetime. Nonetheless, a short visit to any of them can be an adventure of discovery and delight. Because I am an enthusiast rather than an expert, technical terms are avoided where possible but, when used, they are printed in *italic* and a definition or an explanation will be found

in the Glossary. There, entries will also be found for famous persons, artists, architects and craftsmen, as well as historical notes for background information. Saints' names are italicised in the text and thumbnail sketches of them will be found in Appendix I. Styles of architecture are summarised in Appendix II. The book covers all Anglican churches currently in use and those cared for by the Churches Conservation Trust which are still consecrated and used for occasional services. Post-medieval and modern churches have their own fascination and do not deserve to be ignored, and I cannot recall a visit that did not yield something of interest.

Sir Henry Wootton, James I's writer-diplomat, might well have been thinking of churches when he wrote that the essentials of good building were 'commoditie, firmness and delight' – the delights to be experienced in discovering the glories, beauties, ornamentations and downright eccentricities that abound in our churches. They are not just buildings constructed to specific architectural patterns and designed for common worship. They have become mute witnesses to the communities they have served over the centuries, intimate parochial histories, ageless symbols of continuity whose essence has been formed by the countless good souls who have worshipped in them, loved them and have been buried within and around their walls. If one of them seems neglected (and thankfully that is rare these days), pardon human frailty and remember that this is nothing new. In 1562, *The Second Book of Homilies* talks of '... the sin and shame to see so many churches so ruinous

and so foully decayed in almost every corner... Suffer them not to be defiled with rain and weather, with dung of doves, owls, choughs... and other filthiness'. The Victorians inherited a legacy of neglect, and while many a restoration or rebuilding may be criticised, we owe them a debt that is not always acknowledged. In general our churches are in better state than they have been for centuries, thanks to the energies and faith of local communities. The sterling work of the Suffolk Historic Churches Trust, the Churches Conservation Trust, and a growing national awareness of the scale of the problem

all contribute to a substantially improved position.

Visitors will find that binoculars are invaluable for appreciating the often beautiful details of roofs, wall paintings and stained glass, and a powerful torch comes in handy if the weather is dismal.

Once again I wish to express my warmest thanks to all those who have helped me, especially Andrew Anderson, Michael Daley, James Halsall, George Pipe and Roy Tricker. The host of kind people that I met by chance along the way have treasure in store.

D.P.M.
Norwich, 2009

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