

HOLY TRINITY CHURCH

The church of Holy Trinity serves the parish of Cuckfield. Historically it served the market town of Cuckfield and a wide area of the surrounding country but in the mid-19th century new parishes were formed and churches built in the 'outlying districts' of Staplefield and Haywards Heath.

EARLY HISTORY

Before his death in 1088, William de Warenne, 1st Earl of Surrey, drafted charters granting 'all churches with appurtenances and all tithes' to the Lewes Priory of St Pancras. About 1092, his son William, 2nd Earl of Surrey, confirmed his father's wishes in two charters listing sixty churches, thirty-nine of them in Sussex. Translation of the Latin text gives 'the tithe of all things in Kukefeld' and 'the church of Kukefeld' and is the first known mention of Cuckfield. These charters have been lost but copies were made for the Lewes Cartulary in 1444, and this document is preserved in the British Museum.

In 1125, Bishop Ralph of Chichester confirmed the Warenne grants to St Pancras Priory, including 'Cucufelda', and about 1200, William, 5th Earl of Surrey, granted land 'to God and the Church of Holy Trinity of Cukufeld'.

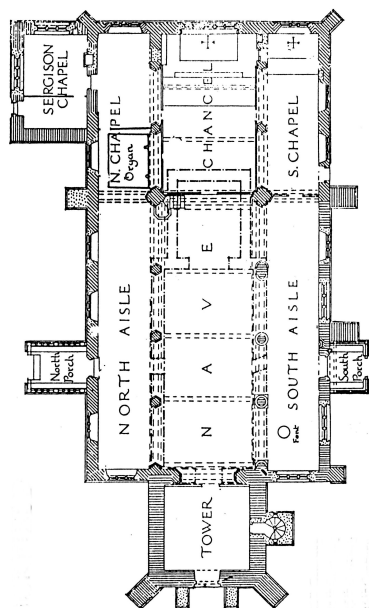
In about 1250, Bishop Richard of Chichester, later canonised as St Richard, arranged with the Prior of St Pancras for Walter de Warnecamp to be the first parish priest of the Vicarage of Cuckfield and to proceed with rebuilding the small chapel, which stood within the area of the present nave. (see plan)

THE BUILDING

13th C. The small chapel was extended into the south aisle by opening the south wall into three arches supported by hexagonal columns. The square tower was also built up to the string course.

14th C. The north aisle was added with another three arches supported by circular columns. Building of the chancel and side chapels followed to complete the church structure, including the trefoil corbel for the castellated table on top of the tower and the shingled spire. The walls of the nave and chancel were raised to accommodate clerestory windows above the aisle roofs.

15th C. The external aisle walls were raised to slope the roof in one span from the ridge, thereby blinding the clerestory windows.



16TH c. The Sergison (or mortuary) chapel was built adjoining the north side chapel, probably by the Bowyer family, and inherited by the Sergisons. In 1888, the Sergison family gifted it to the church and it was renovated as the clergy vestry.

19th C. From 1855 onwards there were major refurbishments to the interior of the church, giving it its present predominantly Victorian aspect. The tower stairway dates from 1870, as do many of the interior fittings of the tower. The north porch was rebuilt in 1878 and the south porch in 1883 to a design by C. E. Kempe (1838-1907), a worshipping member of this church.

20th C. The south side of the roof with its Horsham stone was restored in 1923 owing to its dangerous state, and the slate roof in the north side replaced the following year. The stone on the roof weighs approximately 81 tonnes.

The tower spire was reshingled in 1869 and again in 1973, but in 1980, it was destroyed by fire and had to be replaced by the present structure, which is built around a steel framework rather than the original timber construction.

THE INTERIOR

A programme of major alterations to the interior commenced in 1855. The main changes were:-

- Removal of the singing/musicians' gallery at the west end of the church.
- Replacement of unusually high-sided box pews and private family galleries with the present pews.
- Removal of a three-decker pulpit from the chancel and installation of choir pews. The pulpit was replaced by a temporary wooden structure positioned where the lectern (presented in 1887) now stands. The present pulpit, designed by Kempe, dates from 1893.
- Replacement of the 14th C perpendicular window in the chancel with the present (shorter) window. The Trinity window above was covered in 1865 but reopened in 1924.
- Installation of the present altar in 1865.
- Installation of the organ in its present position. A barrel organ given in 1839 was followed by that of a pipe organ in 1842. Both were originally installed in the west gallery. The pipe organ was rebuilt and enlarged to approximately its present size in 1884. In 1991 there was a major overhaul with significant specification changes.

In 1880 the chancel screen was erected in memory of the Revd T. Astley Maberly, Vicar from 1841-1877, who was responsible for the refurbishment.

The refurbishing of the south chapel took place in the last century.

THE CEILING

This is the unique feature of the church. The original (unpainted) ceiling, dating from the 15th C, is divided into plastered panels by moulded ribs with bosses at the intersections. Two bosses in the chancel carry the sacred monograms IHS and BVM. Others carry the badges of the Nevilles: the chained bull, crowned portcullis, crossed staples and red rose of Lancaster. These suggest that the ceiling may have been the gift of Edward Neville, Lord Abergavenny,

grandson of John of Gaunt, who was writing from Cuckfield in 1464.

The decorated ceilings, a rare piece of Victoriana, are also the work of Kempe. The chancel ceiling was painted in 1865 and the decoration of the nave ceiling, restoration of beams and bosses and the addition of ten carved winged angels at the base of the hammer beams in 1886 at a cost of £215.

Restoration work on the ceilings, beams, bosses and angels was carried out in 2002 at a cost of £75,000.

The wooden ceilings in the north and south aisles date from 1889 and cover lath and plaster ceilings dating from 1801. Before this, the aisles were open up to the rafters. The bosses were added in 1891 from designs by Kempe.



THE WINDOWS

All the stained glass windows were commissioned in the latter half of the 19th C apart from the window at the west end of the south aisle (1845). Four of the windows were designed by Kempe: St Michael the Archangel on the tower west wall, St Richard of Chichester on the tower north wall, The Tree of Jesse on the west wall of the north aisle and a Sergison memorial window on the west end of the north aisle.

Detailed information with photographs of all the windows is available.

THE MEMORIALS

Probably the earliest memorial is a fragment of a brass now on the west end of the north wall with the words '*of your charity pray for the soul of Mylicent Mychell.*' She was the wife of John Mychell and they lived at Ockenden House (now known as Ockenden Manor) in the early 16th century.

On the walls of the south chapel and aisle are 13 monuments to members of the Burrell family who made their fortunes as ironmasters, and later lived at Ockenden House. The earliest is that of Gerard Burrell, Vicar of Cuckfield 1483-1509. He was the first of the family to settle in Cuckfield.

The south chapel also contains two brasses to Henry Bowyer who built Cuckfield Park in 1574 and died in 1588. One on the floor (now covered) shows a standing figure in doublet and ruff,

another on the north wall, shows him kneeling opposite his wife, Elizabeth Vaux, with their three sons and four daughters. Monuments to his descendants, the Hendleys, are also in the south chapel.

The funerary helmet of Sir Walter Hendley hangs on the south wall of the chancel. It is flanked by the funerary banners of the Boyer (left facing) and Hendley families, both of which were renewed in 1988.

The monument to Charles Sergison, who purchased Cuckfield Park in 1691 and whose family retained the estate until 1968, is on the left of the altar. His heirs, the Warden Sergisons, are commemorated in a series of fine slate and stone plaques on the wall of the north aisle.

There is a quaint wooden rail memorial to Sarah Tulet, a servant of the Sergison family, in the churchyard near the north wall of the tower.

OTHER ITEMS OF INTEREST

Boards inscribed with the Ten Commandments, as required by a law of 1625, now hang on either side of the tower arch. Above them is the royal coat of arms of George 1. This must have been repainted between 1801 and 1816, because the arms of Hanover in the centre only existed in that form during these years.

The baptismal font dates from the 13th C. Reputed to have been 'knocked about a bit' in the Civil War, it was repaired before being placed in its present position in 1846.

Substantial remains of the first church clock (1667), with associated details, hang on the north wall of the tower. The present clock dates from 1872; its face was repainted in 1991.

The list of incumbents hangs on the south wall of the tower. The original church bells date from about 1630, but six were recast and two new ones added in 1815.



This leaflet, originally produced for the celebration of the 900th Anniversary of Cuckfield Church in 1992 was updated in 2005.

PARISH CHURCH OF HOLY TRINITY CUCKFIELD



**We welcome you to this house of God
which stands as a symbol of over 900
years of Christian witness and worship in
Cuckfield.**

**Please feel free to walk around and
admire its beauty and to seek peace
within its walls**