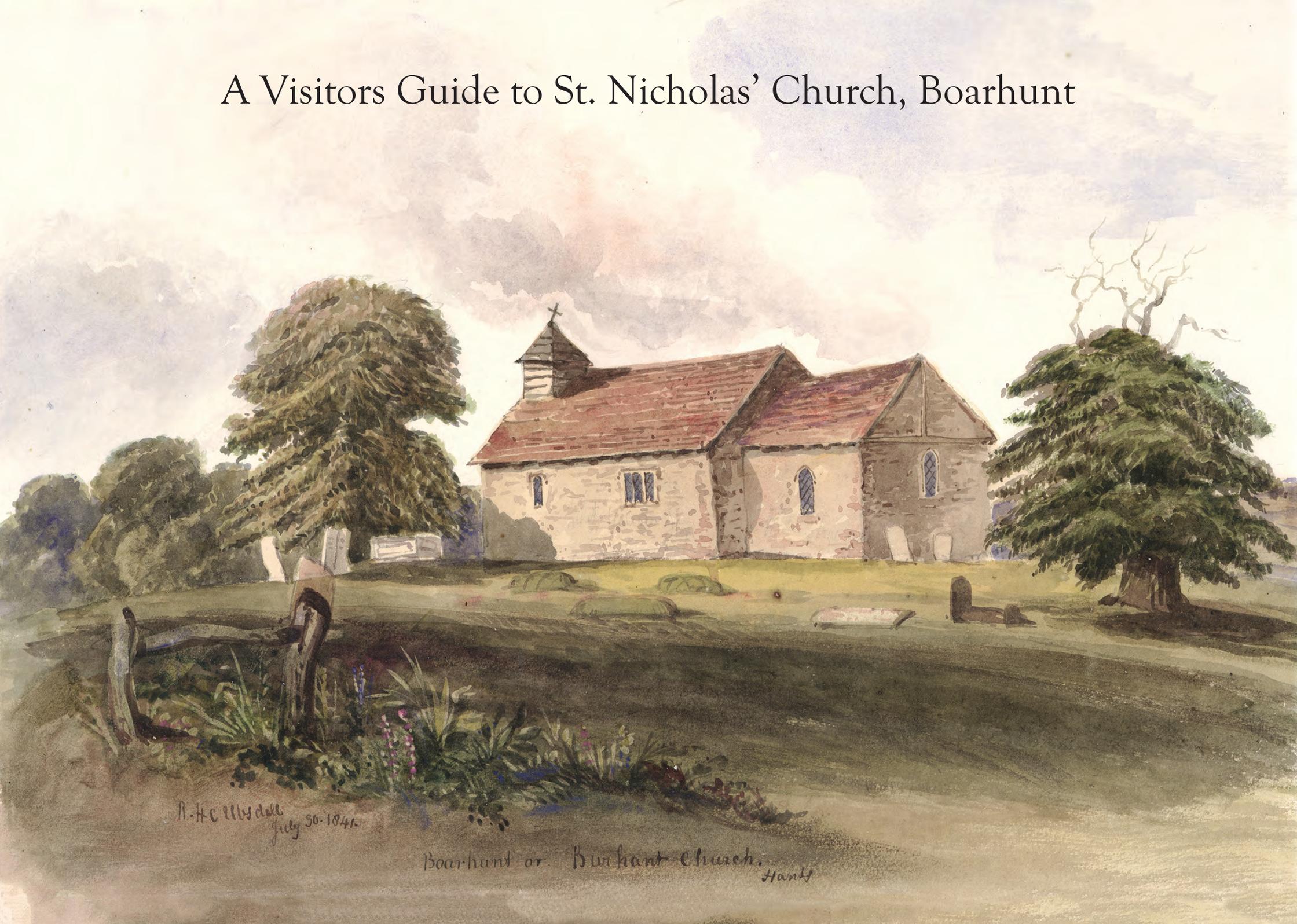
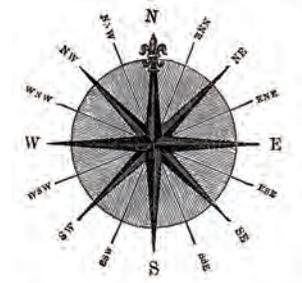
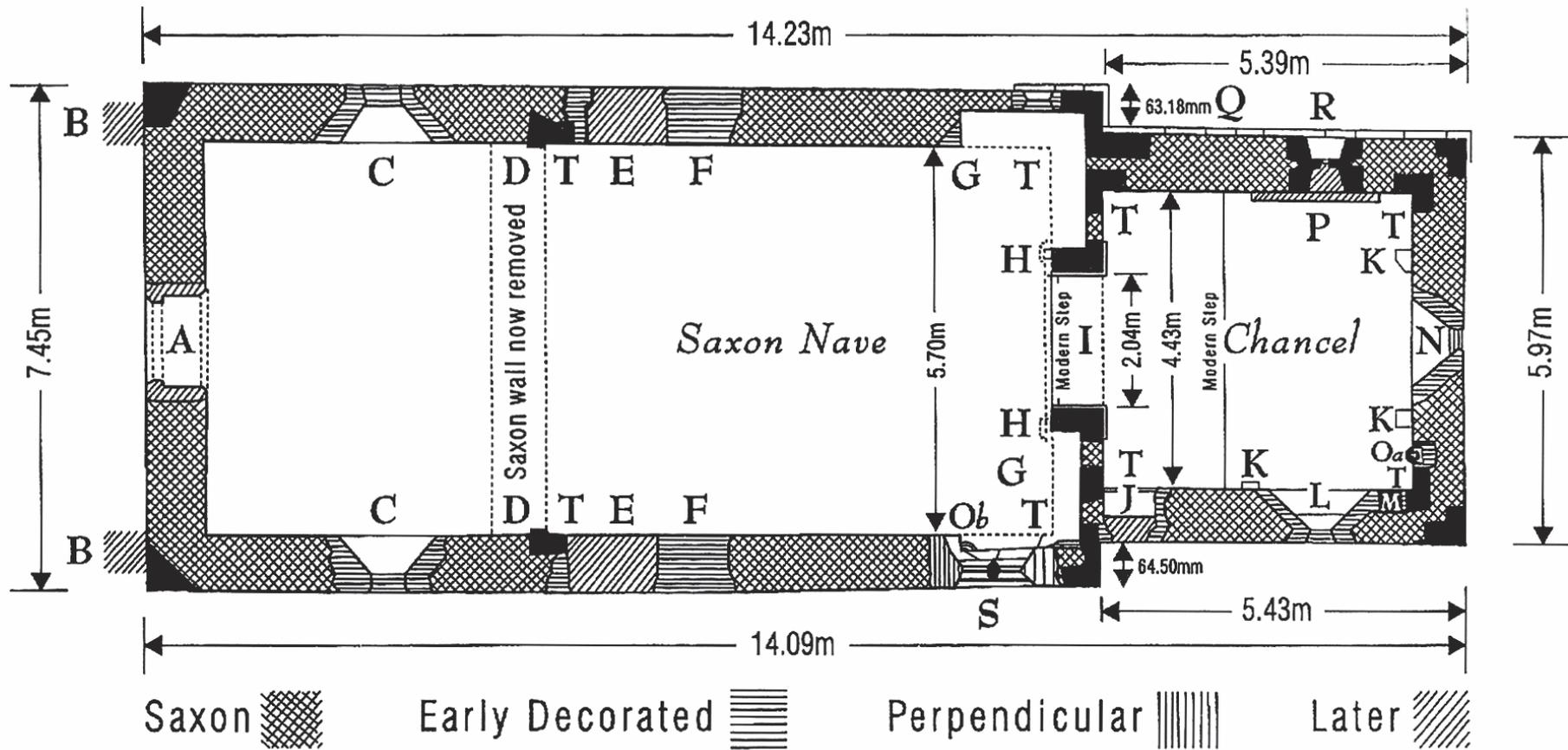


A Visitors Guide to St. Nicholas' Church, Boarhunt



A. H. C. Myddell
July 30. 1841.

Boarhunt or. Burkant Church.
Hants



Original plan of the church by J.T. Irvine, 1877

St. Nicholas' Church, Boarhunt

Welcome to St. Nicholas' Church - a simple two-cell ancient church, standing in the unspoilt rolling farm and wooded land at the western foot of Portsdown Hill. It has been described as a 'perfect pre-Conquest church', 'a valuable specimen' and 'a wonderful little treasure house'.

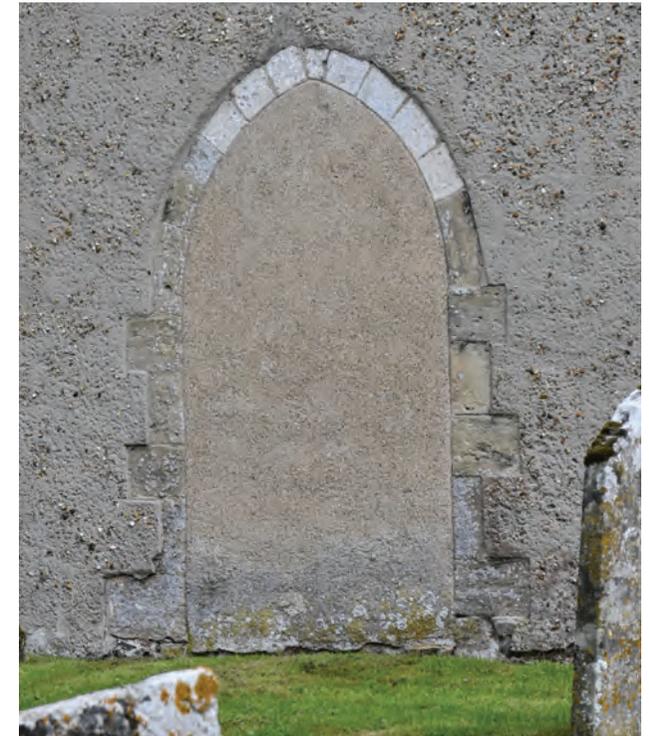
St Nicholas, the Parish church of Boarhunt, is situated in South Boarhunt and is more than two miles away by road from the centre of its village, North Boarhunt. The church is, like its sister church, St James Without-the-Priory Gate in Southwick, wholly owned and administered by the Southwick Estate under the care of the Squire, Mr Thistlethwayte. Both churches are Donative Lay Peculiars. 'Donative' describes the legal ability of the owner, to gift or will property, in this case a church. 'Peculiar' is the state of a church exempt from the jurisdiction of the Ordinary (the Bishop), in whose Diocese the churches are. The term 'Lay' is used to distinguish the fact that a church is not 'Royal'. The Squire acts as a 'Lay Prior' with the intrinsic authority within the parish to appoint a Chaplain, Vergers and Churchwardens.

We hope you will enjoy your visit and have time for some quiet reflection and prayer in these tranquil and pleasant surroundings. But if you are reading this guide elsewhere, then we hope you will visit us soon.

St. Nicholas' Church is not open every day but you are very welcome to join us at our service: the Parish Eucharist Service is held at 0930 on the first, third (BCP) and fifth Sunday of each month. Access to the church at other times can be arranged by contacting the verger: verger@stnicholasboarhunt.org.uk or chaplain@stjamesouthwick.org.uk

You can also visit our website to check the timetable of services and other church activities at: www.stnicholasboarhunt.org.uk/

The purpose of this short guide is to tell you what we know about the history of the church and its surroundings and point out items of interest you will see as you walk round. The guide incorporates descriptions and a plan that were originally published by J.T. Irvine in 1877.



Contents

History and Background	2
Guide to the Church	4
Outside The Church page	11

History and Background

The dedication of the church is to St. Nicholas, as shown by the Victorian glass in the 13th century lancet east window. Although pre-dating St. James' Church, St. Nicholas' Church became a chapel of Southwick from the late 13th century and later became regarded as a church in its own right.

The building, apart from the west wall and buttresses, which are of Bath stone, is constructed of Quarr stone from the Isle of Wight.

Some archaeologists believe that a place of worship existed on this site in the pre-Christian era and, while the date of the foundation of the church is lost in history, it was certainly built by Saxons who worked untroubled by, and unaware of, William who was to become the Conqueror. The church is certainly more than 950 years old and, as far as can be judged, has been in constant use (apart from a period in the early 1800s) as a place of worship throughout its history.

The church existed at Boarhunt when the Domesday Survey was carried out and was one of the earliest churches in the UK to be described as being of Anglo Saxon origin. It was undoubtedly built for a Saxon owner of a manor, which at the time of the Domesday Survey, may have been the one owned by Earl Roger on an estate recorded as "Borhunte".

The remains of Saxon doorways can be seen on both the north and south walls, and the more prominent brick-blocked openings are entrances of the 13th century.

Restoration of the church took place in 1853 and, despite this, much of the original structure of the church remains. Prior to the restoration, the church had been allowed to fall into a state of extreme neglect though apparently still used for services.



The painting on the front cover is reproduced by kind permission of Portsmouth Museum Service, Portsmouth City Council. It shows St. Nicholas Church at Boarhunt painted by the 19th Century Portsmouth artist and photographer Richard Henry Clement Ubsdell. The painting is dated July 30th 1841.



The Rev. W.J. Birkbeck, Vicar of Southwick during the 1870s states in a letter that:

“The floor was of earth, the tiles were to be seen from the inside, and were peopled by jackdaws. There was a heap of brickbats in the corner, on which the sexton stood to ring the single bell, which soon after was stolen from a wooden bell-cot that then stood on the roof. There were no pews on one side and only four on the other, of very ancient date, and so uncomfortable that no-one could sit in them with any comfort. The congregation consisted of some six or eight persons, and the churchyard was unenclosed and trodden down. From this state of neglect the church was rescued by the late Mr. Thistlethwayte; and, considering that nothing was known of its value as an architectural curiosity, it was most fortunate that the restoration was so conservative. I am told that the workmen then employed actually broke their tools against the old roughcast and mortar. To this fact, and to its previous time of neglect, I think we may attribute its preservation as an almost perfect Saxon church.”

The beautiful painting by the 19th Century Portsmouth artist RHC Ubsdell, dated July 30th 1841, shown on the cover, clearly illustrates the previous wooden bell-tower mentioned in Birbeck’s letter.

St. Nicholas’ Church, Boarhunt



Historic buildings need continued inspection and upkeep. In the mid-1980s, the Southwick Estate replaced the roofing above the altar with new rafters made from oak sourced from their woods.

During the 1990s, an expert from the Lime Centre near Winchester was contracted to remove the emulsion from the internal walls and they are now painted in limewash. The flooring was also renewed and the font was moved from the south to the north side of the church. During work to renew the steps to the pulpit, the original Saxon foundations were briefly revealed. In early 2000, the buttresses on the west wall required securing with ties.



In 2009, the main church roof was stripped back to the rafters, some of which needed repair, and the roof retiled. Deathwatch beetle had at some time attacked the timber trusses but, thankfully, only superficially and had already been treated. Some remedial works were also undertaken on the stonework and copings, disabled access from the lower car park to the churchyard was put in alongside the entrance steps and the “lych gate” was rebuilt.

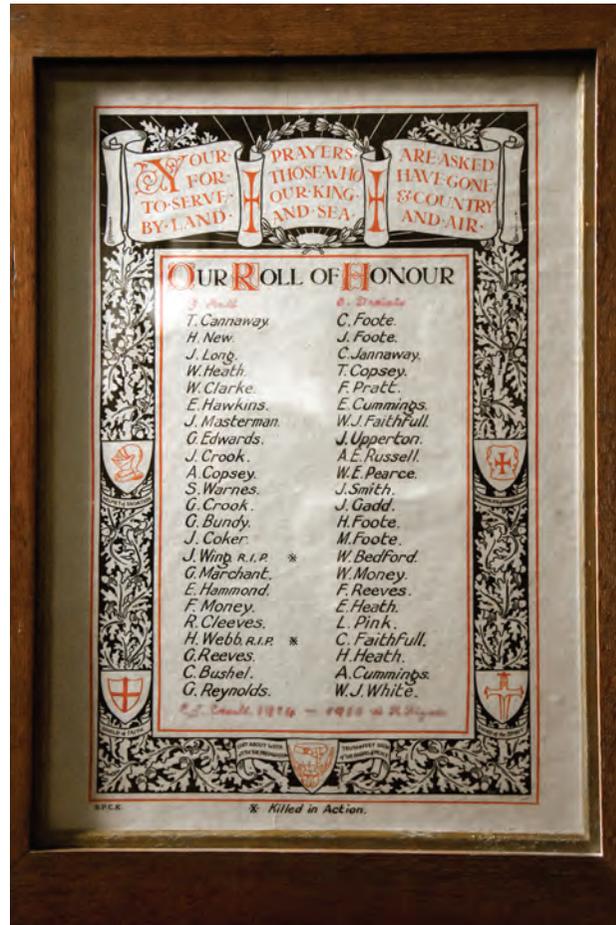
The baptismal register for Boarhunt dates from 1578 and the burial register from 1588. The Communion cup is fine Elizabethan silver.

Guide to the Church

A plan of the church is given on the inside cover. The bracketed letters below refer to the letters in the plan.

The present west door (A) is the only entry to the church as previous Saxon and 13th century doors were blocked up. The whole of its surrounds date from the 1853 restoration and are of Bath stone. On the left, inside the entrance door, is a small vestry/cupboard and behind the door on the right is a wooden spiral staircase leading to the gallery.

On entering the church, on the right is a framed "Roll of Honour" commemorating those connected with the village who served during the 1914 - 1918 war. The two names with an asterisk, Sergt. Pilot Arthur John Wing and Sergt. Henry Webb, are those who lost their lives and they are further commemorated by a plaque on the north wall.



Over the west gallery is a single pointed light but its origins cannot be ascertained.

The windows each side (C) are of the Early Decorated style and were inserted when the nave was enlarged by removal of the original interior Saxon wall (D), west of the nave. Traces of the cutting down of this wall can be seen on both sides which show how thick the wall would have been.

Where the wall's eastern face would have intersected with the side walls, the bonding quoins still remain in both walls (T).

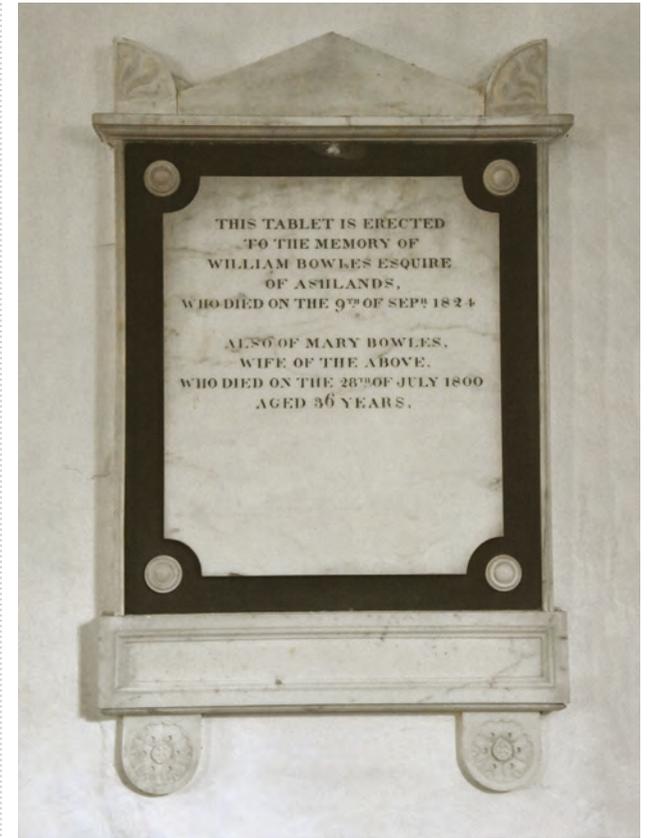
The font, a massive tub-shaped and tapering bowl, is large enough for the 'dipping' of Saxon babies (the practice being to immerse most of the baby at this time), and is among the oldest example in Hampshire.



On both sides of the church (E) are the 13th century blocked-up north and south doors. It appears that the stonework of the earlier Saxon doors (further east) was used, and surplus old stonework used for the new entrance surrounds and windows.

Hiding much of the outline of the old south Saxon door is the Eddowes Monument. It is a memorial to Robert Eddowes Esq., former 'Storekeeper of the Ordnance at Portsmouth' who died in 1765 age 71. Also to the Rev. Robert Eddowes who died in 1767, Rector of Hannington and Vicar of Twyford, together with other members of the Eddowes family. The Eddowes family had lived at Ashlands, Boarhunt.

Now preserved under limewash, slightly to the west of the Eddowes monument was at one time the remains of simple medieval paintings. Traces of medieval scroll decoration can still be seen to the right of the Eddowes monument on the former 13th century entrance surround.



Opposite on the north wall is a memorial plaque for William Henry Bowles who died in 1824 and his wife, Mary, who died in 1800 aged 36. It is believed they had connections to the Eddowes family and they also owned and lived at Ashlands. In June 1825, Thomas Thistlethwayte, the Squire of Southwick at that time, bought the Ashlands estate at auction. It was described in the Hampshire Chronicle:

“A truly desirable freehold Estate comprising an excellent Mansion, replete with domestic offices, detached Coach-house, stables, granary, cottage, gardens and pleasure grounds called Ashlands, near Southwick, a delightful sequestered spot, a beautiful sheet of water, adorned with stately timber, which forms a scenery truly picturesque; together with 54 acres of arable and meadow land, in a fine sporting country, near two packs of fox hounds.”

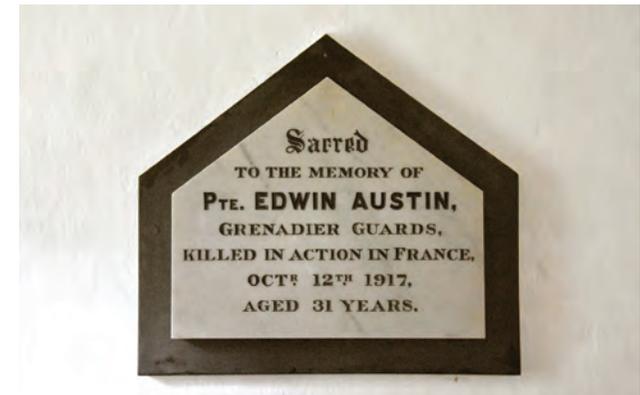


In the nave, the pews, the Squire's boxed pew (still used as such), the three-decker pulpit and the west gallery, all in plain pitch pine, remain from the restoration of 1853. Sir Nikolaus Pevsner, the architectural author, observed that the restoration work 'suggests an immunity, in this remote place, from the influence of ecclesiological revival which had, by then, penetrated almost everywhere else'.

Behind the Squire's boxed pew is a small stained glass window showing the family crest of Hugh and Eva Borthwick-Norton. Eva, who died in 1988, was the Squire of Southwick for many years.

On the wall above the pew is a memorial to Private Edwin Austin of the Grenadier Guards who was killed in France on 12th October 1917.

Before the war, Edwin Austin was an ironmonger's assistant at Fareham and, on 26th July 1913, he married Ellen Cox, daughter of John Cox the Farmer of Manor Farm, Boarhunt, opposite to the church. It is believed that Edwin served as Batman to one of the Squire's relatives, an officer in the Grenadier Guards. Edwin was serving with a machine gun section when he was killed.





The colourful kneelers around the church have all been embroidered and donated over the years by parishioners. One kneeler inside the Squire's boxed pew has been left unfinished; embroidery work was started by the former minister Revd. Moore, but sadly he died in March 2007 before he could finish it, and it has been left as such in his memory.

The two-light window (S) in the south wall of the nave is late Tudor and was inserted to give light to the pulpit.

Chapels were once formed at the east end of the nave (G). Part of the space required was obtained by cutting into the chancel arch and the side walls of the Saxon building. Both chapels are of Early Decorated date. The small amount of space available in the original nave was so reduced by these chapels that the deficiency was rectified by the removal of the interior Saxon west wall (previously mentioned) and use made of the vacant space beyond it. To provide essential light, new windows were inserted and the Saxon doors replaced by new ones further west. Square pilasters (H) belonging

to the face of the chancel arch were most likely removed to enable the screens of the chapels to fit up to the wall face.

The chancel arch (I) differs in respect of height and width from the proportion of the early Saxon arches. It is a plain unmoulded arch, less than 2.13 metres wide, with a square band raised over the head finishing at the level of four flatstones on the left and five flatstones on the right, but which, at one time no doubt, continued down to the floor.

The unusual half-arch to the left of the chancel arch along the north wall is a 13th century addition and the corresponding space on the right was used for a side altar evidenced by the stone piscine (a shallow basin) at the foot of the pulpit steps.

Through the chancel arch on the right is another blocked-up door thought to be the priest's door (J), probably inserted at the same time as the erection of the chapels.





In the chancel there are three corbels for figures (K), all inserted about the same period. They may mark the sites of small altars for obituary services. The window in the south wall of the chancel (L) is of the same date as the corbels with jambs made from Sussex sandstone. In the south east corner of the chancel is a locker (M) of the same date as the window. See photograph on page 2.

The east window (N) is of one small pointed light. Its jambs externally are of newer Bath stone; the internal ones are old, and of chalk. The window shows the figure of St. Nicholas of Myra with a child, and underneath, a ship. At the bottom of the window are the words "In Memory of Jean Loring Feb 3rd 1865".



Jean Loring was the wife of the Reverend Henry Nele Loring who was the minister at Southwick and Boarhunt at that time. They married in London on 5th December 1863. Her death in 1865 at Southwick Vicarage is recorded as being due to "child birth" and "phlebitis"; she was 42 years old. It is assumed the baby also died as no birth appears to have been registered and there is no evidence of a child in the 1871 census. Jane Bird was present at the death and was the informant. She is shown in the 1871 census as a 50 year old housemaid living at the Southwick Vicarage.

The stone brackets on either side of the altar are probably image brackets on which statues (such as the Virgin and Child) stood in the Middle Ages to



stimulate devotion. The recess in the south wall was probably used as an aumbry (a recessed cabinet built into the wall) for the storage of the sacred vessels.

The sculptured Norman head (O) is 13th century work, as is the piscine to its right, where priests would have washed Communion vessels. The recess had a wooden door added at a later date but this was removed.

On the north wall of the chancel is an interesting example of an early classic monument (P), dated 1577. Unfortunately it is placed to block up nearly the whole of the interior of the Saxon light in the north wall, although a very small part of it is left

open above the cornice to show the ornament existing on the inner face of the mid wall slab to be very similar to that existing on the outside.

The monument is a typical and highly regarded example of Elizabethan times, the strapwork around the coats of arms and the proportions of the Corinthian columns being particularly notable; it was said to be executed by an itinerant Flemish mason for the sum of £5. The monument was renovated in early 2000 by the Henslow family who were first recorded as armigers of Boarhunt in 1412. At some time it was removed from elsewhere in the church and seemingly damaged during transit. Ralph Henslow who died in 1577 was Clerk of the Crown for Hampshire 1541-75; burgess of Portsmouth 1550 and Mayor's assistant 1559.

The coat of arms in the centre of the monument are of the Henslow family, with Pounce, for Clara the wife of Ralph Henslow to the left; and Poole (or Pole) to the right, the arms of the family of Katherine, his second wife.

The flatstone at the foot of the monument commemorates Sir Thomas Henslow who died in 1662. His arms are impaled with Uvedale. A translation of the Latin inscription is given in a frame placed on the monument. An extract reads:

'Here lie the mortal remains of the Lord's Servant Thomas Henslow a man of exceeding rich talent in whose passing learning lost a scholar of distinction, the Church a great supporter, the poor a source of succour and his friends a help, nay rather a pillar of strength...'

J.T. Irvine included in his plan of the church the position of 8 nook angles (T), possessing bonding quoins, as well as finished as the ordinary angle quoins.

Before leaving the church it is worth noting the four brass light fittings that were designed by the Squire and made by the Southwick Estate's blacksmith in 2010.

St. Nicholas' Church, Boarhunt



Outside The Church



Take care if walking around the perimeter of the church as the grass banking can be slippery!

The walls of the church are rubble and flint and the west wall has been refaced with knapped flint and flint gallets. The two external buttresses (B) supporting the west wall were built using Bath stone probably at the time of the 1853 restoration.

The open bell turret, again dating from the 1853 restoration, has been formed as an archway, with delicately moulded pillars and is roofed with stone tiles.



Along the south wall, one of the old 13th century entrances which was blocked up can be clearly seen. In his article of 1877, Irvine stated that sufficient traces remain of the Saxon door (F) to show that it had a fine arch and, perhaps, a carved tympanum (a semi-circular decorative wall surface usually over an entrance).



The window is the late Tudor two-light window which internally gives light to the pulpit.

Further along the south elevation is another blocked up door thought to be the priest's door of the original building (J).



On the east gable a vertical pilaster strip rises from a stone string course, a feature of Saxon architecture.

The grave with ironwork surrounds and directly beneath the east elevation stained glass window, is thought to be that of Jean Loring who died in 1865 (see page 8) and to whom the window was dedicated. Sadly, no legible inscriptions remain.



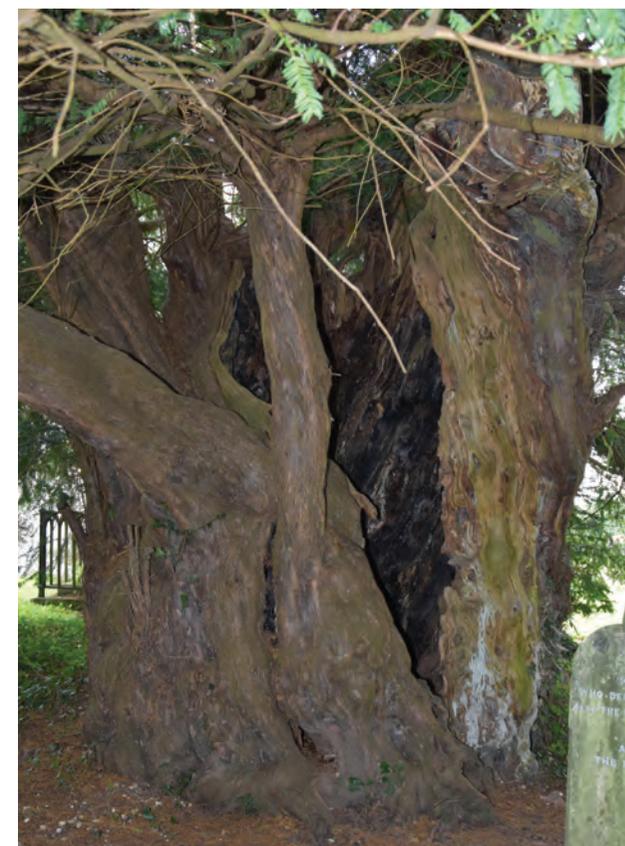
The window in the north wall of the chancel (R) is the one almost completely blocked inside the church by the Henslow monument. From outside, it can be seen to be an excellent example of a double-splayed Saxon window opening, decorated with a double line of cable-moulding. No trace of an early light opening, except this one, can be seen anywhere throughout the church. It therefore could have been the only window in Saxon times. There is some evidence that a wooden shutter was fitted at a later date.



Part of the external square plinth to the building is marked at (Q) on the plan but has since been hidden beneath concrete, necessary to improve the drainage at this part of the church.

The outline of the blocked up 13th century door can be seen along the north wall. On the rough-cast above it, traces exist suggesting there was once a wooden porch of considerable size.

The east end of the church is greatly overshadowed by the famous yew tree. With a circumference of 8.23 metres, it has been estimated to date from approximately 185 AD. This means the tree was already some 880 years old when the Saxon church was established here in the 11th century.



Yew trees were held sacred by the Druids in pre-Christian times and came to symbolise death and resurrection in Celtic culture. The toxicity of the tree's needles in particular, which can prove fatal, may have contributed to its connections with death. The themes of death and resurrection continued into the Christian era, with the custom of yew shoots being buried with the deceased, and boughs of yew being used as 'Palms' in church at Easter. Yew trees have in fact established a popular association with old churches in Britain, to the

extent that very old specimens of yew trees are now relatively rare outside of church grounds.

The yew tree here at Boarhunt is hollow with a cavity in the bole of some 1.8m (6 feet) width. Local legend has it that a family, in medieval times, sheltered within the hollow trunk throughout an entire winter. An alternative story suggests that the incumbent minister allowed a poor widow to shelter there during Victorian times.

The cemetery to the west of the church is still used for the burial of villagers from both Southwick and Boarhunt. In 1995, the Squire donated two acres to enable the extension to the churchyard.

See www.treesforlife.org.uk/forest/mythology-folklore/yew



There is a sad story behind one of the graves in the churchyard. Recorded in local newspapers on 8th January 1879, Mr. William Pain (72) a widower and Farmer of Bere Farm, had gone on New Year's Day 1879 to attend the funeral of a friend. It had been arranged with his daughter Ellen (43) that she would take the pony and trap to Fareham Railway Station to pick up Mr. Pain on his return. It was a very wet and windy day and poor Ellen met with an accident on the road and went to Mr. Carver at Manor Farm

Boarhunt for help. He kindly went instead to pick up Mr. Pain. On their return to Manor Farm, Mr. Pain declined Mr. Carver's offer to take him and Ellen back home and, instead, they set out on foot at about 8.30 pm when it would have been very dark. Due to the storms, the river was swollen and the meadows flooded. Sadly, the following day, the bodies of William and Ellen were found in the river by Grub Wood Bridge, where they had drowned.





For further information please visit
www.stjamessouthwick.org.uk
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