



THE CHURCHES  
CONSERVATION TRUST



# ST PETER'S CHURCH

Satterleigh, Devon



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CONSERVATION TRUST

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# ST PETER'S CHURCH

by John HB Andrews, revised by Christopher Dalton (Church and architectural historian, writer on buildings and bells, architectural photographer and lay canon of Hereford Cathedral)

## HISTORY

*'Hereabouts the Bray meeteth with the river Moule, which strengthened with her stream, fleeteth with a full current, to pay tribute to Taw, and giveth it a great push over against':*

thus wrote Tristram Risdon in his survey of Devon in the early 17th century.

The Bray (for a few metres) and the Mole form the eastern and southern boundary of this parish of 510 acres (206 hectares). On the west and north-west it is bounded by Warkleigh, and on the north-east by Chittlehampton. The name is said to mean 'woodland of robbers'. One-tenth of the steeply indented parish, which rises from about 180 feet (55 m) to about 520 feet (159 m) above sea level, is still woodland. There is little doubt that the present parishes of Filleigh, Warkleigh and Satterleigh formed, like Chittlehamholt which was separated in modern times, part of the parish and manor (if one may use such definite terms of so early a period) of Chittlehampton, which was the centre of the Saxon settlement and colonisation of the area.

*Front cover: Interior looking east  
(Boris Baggs)*

*Left: The pulpit and pews  
(Christopher Dalton)*





*Exterior from the south-west (Boris Baggs)*

In Domesday Book Satterleigh (*Saterleia*) is, however, already a separate manor held in demesne by Godbold who is called Arbalistarius, the ordnance-master or bow-bearer. Before the Conquest it had been the property of Olnod. Its area is given there as 424 acres (172 hectares) and its value 26 shillings. On Godbold's death it appears to have been given as a freehold of Warkleigh manor to the Somersetshire honour of Stoke Courcy (Stogursey), of which it was held by Raleigh of Warkleigh. As late as 1770 an annual chief rent of 6d was due from the owners of Satterleigh Barton to the lord of the manor of Warkleigh. It is hardly conceivable that Satterleigh would have become a separate parish after the union of the manor with Warkleigh. We may therefore assume that it has been a parish since Saxon times. The Barton has been the residence of the Hacche, Melhuish and Byne families.

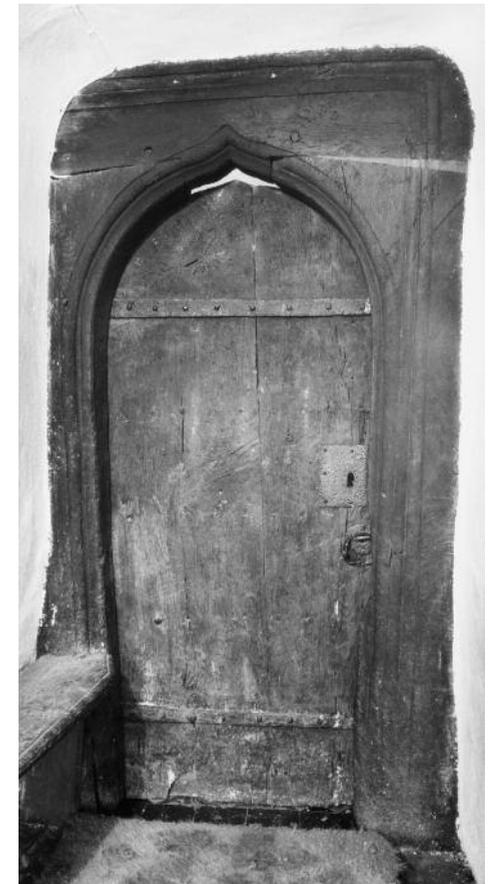
In 1801 the population of Satterleigh was 64, much the same as it had been in 1642, but by the 1901 census it had fallen to 55. The present population is about 40. In March 1996 the church was declared formally redundant and passed into the care of The Churches Conservation Trust. Repairs have been carried out under the direction of the architect Kate Price, of The Architects Design Group Plymouth.

## *The* CHURCH

The church of St Peter is a small structure consisting of nave, chancel, south porch and a wooden bell-cote on the western gable. It is built of local rubble with a modern slate roof covering. On 3 August 1435 Bishop Lacy granted an indulgence of forty days *ad sustentationem constructionis ecclesie parochialis de Saterlegh*. The existing church may be taken to be substantially of this date, although probably incorporating earlier work. The granting of an indulgence implies that the parish was too poor to repair or rebuild its church. Perhaps in 1435 Satterleigh narrowly escaped the fate of Affeton, where the church was abandoned and the parish annexed to West Worlington in 1439.

Of the furnishings, the font is 15th century and very similar to that at Warkleigh. There is a richly carved ceiling of somewhat later date over the site of the rood, west of the screen. The screen itself has gone but the tympanum over it remains, painted in late Georgian times with the Lord's Prayer and the Creed. The Ten Commandments are on large boards either side of the east window. The glass in this window was given as a memorial to James Gould, of Knapp in Northam, patron of the living, and Maria Marianne his wife. They both died in 1857. The window itself was, like all the others in the church, renewed in the mid-19th century.

The door is original, and in its original wooden frame. Some of the bench ends carved with simple designs are also 15th century. Others in the chancel were carved to match them under



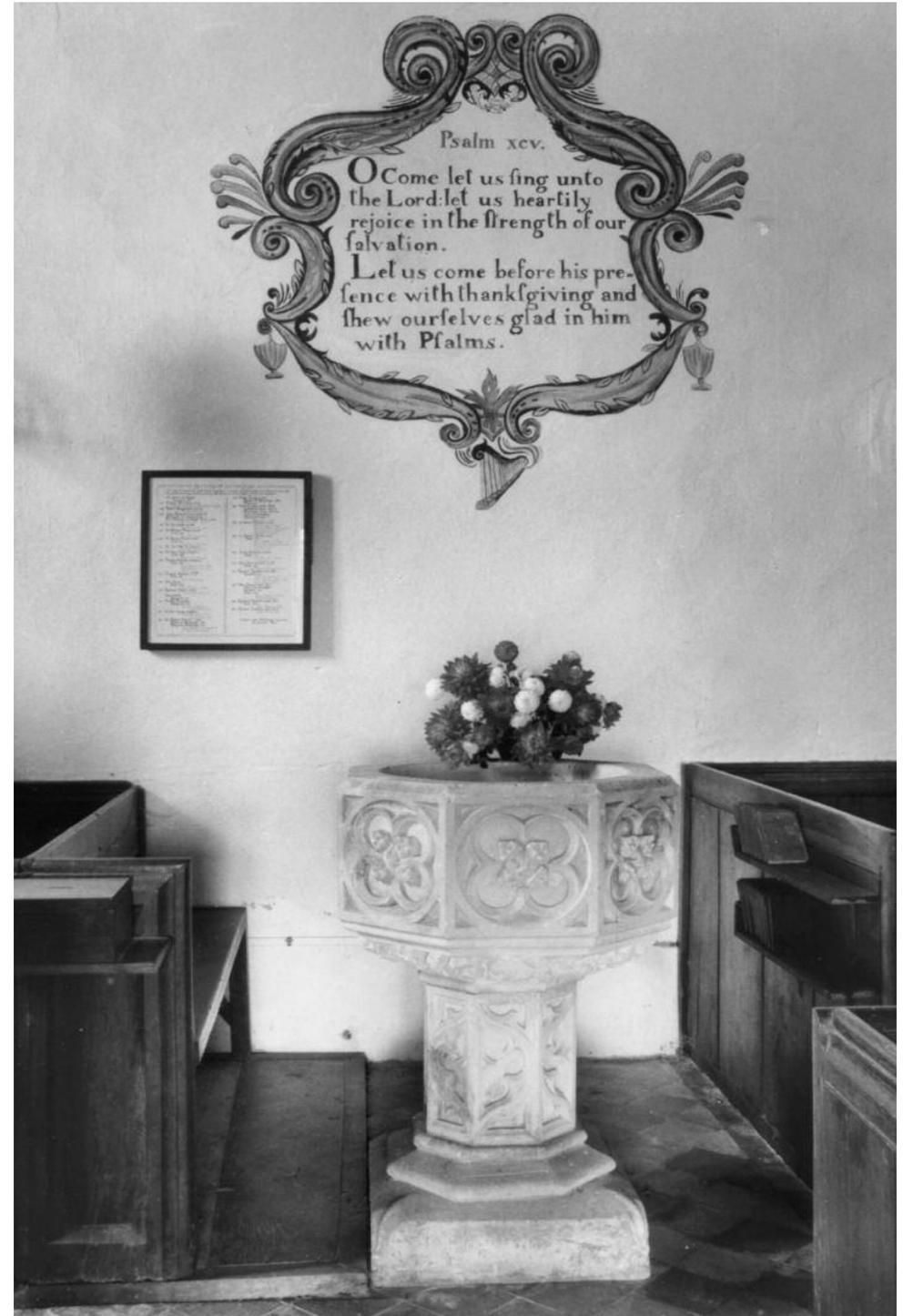
*The south door (Christopher Dalton)*

Right: Fifteenth-century font and Georgian text  
(Christopher Dalton)

Below: Church from the south (Christopher Dalton)

the direction of Miss Salome Thorold (d.1937), of Warkleigh House, who is commemorated by a small brass plate affixed to one of the benches. The altar rails are Victorian but, together with the benches north and south, no doubt preserve the plan of the Restoration chancel. (Other examples preserving the old fittings may be seen at Cruwys Morchard and in St Martin's, Exeter – also in the care of The Churches Conservation Trust.)

On the north wall of the nave is a text which appears to be 18th century; and hat pegs of the same period are a happy reminder of the dignity of a past age. The reading desk and pulpit (which still has its sounding board) are 17th to 18th century. The royal arms over the door, dated 1726, are those in use from the accession of George I in 1714 until 1801 when the arms of France were discontinued by George III. They are (1st) England impaling Scotland, (2nd) France, (3rd) Ireland and (4th) Hanover.



Right: The tympanum of the former screen  
(Christopher Dalton)

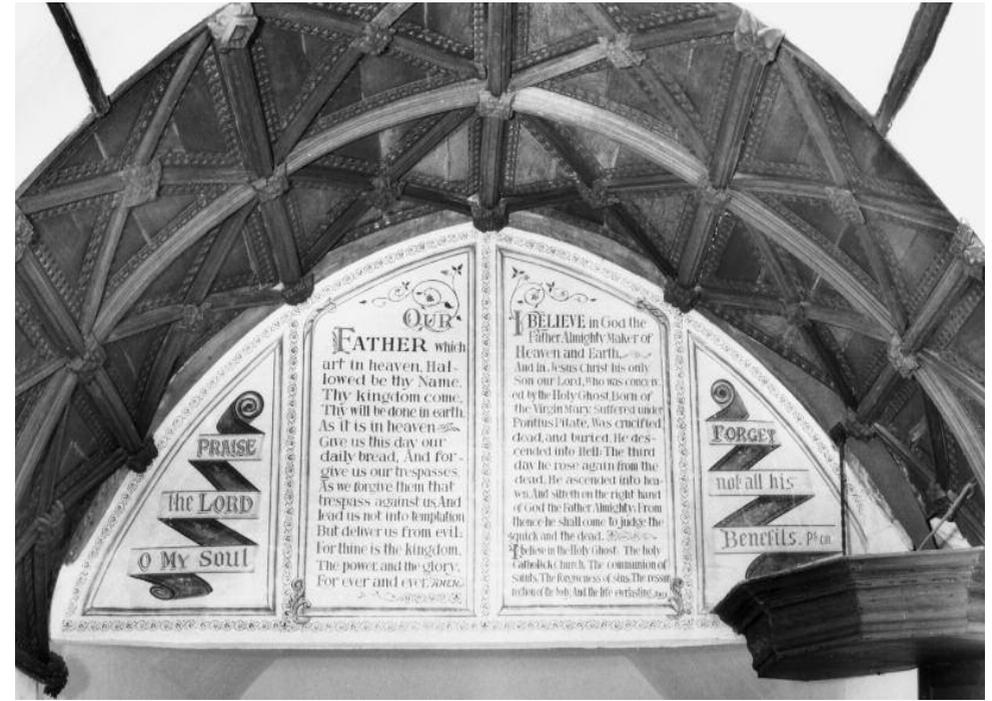
Below: Interior looking west (Christopher Dalton)

On the north wall of the chancel is a mural tablet to Henry Byne of Satterleigh, who died in 1821. The arms are Byne, impaling Thomas quartering Melhuish. The property came to Byne through his wife Mary Frances Thomas (daughter of Thomas of Drake's Place, Somerset), through the widow of her uncle

William Melhuish. The chalice, paten and flagon formerly belonging to the church are inscribed:

*'The gift of William Melhuish Esq. and Mary his wife to Satterleigh Parish 1766.'*

He died in 1770.



The stone which once formed the entrance to his vault is fixed to the south wall of the church. A memorial to Robert Hacche Esq. (1699), now also fixed to the south wall, was formerly in the chancel floor. It bears the demi-lions of this ancient and widespread family.

There were also formerly memorials to Lewis Hacche gent. 1737 and to Robert Hacche the younger gent. 1724. No doubt these, like many elsewhere, disappeared in a Victorian restoration, perhaps in 1852 when the chancel was repaired. In his will Lewis Hacche, minister of the Gospel (d.1673), desired to be buried 'in the little window of the chancel of Satterley Church'. In the churchyard are the base and a small part of the shaft of an ancient cross. The wooden lychgate is a memorial to those who lost their lives in the First World War.

The bell-frame appears to date from the period about 1600. The bells are now almost unique in the county (cf. Ashcombe) in being still fitted with the half-wheels which went out of fashion three centuries ago, when the whole wheel and

its consequent half-pull made change-ringing possible. The first bell bears the inscription

*'JOHN THORN CH:WARDEN 1722'*

and was cast by Evans of Chepstow. The third is inscribed

*'JOHN:THORN:GENT:JAMES:  
HENWOOD:RECTOR:I.C:W: 1714'*

and was cast by John Stadler of Chulmleigh. The second bell is uninscribed but late mediaeval, one of the three bells recorded as being in the 'tower' in 1553. They are all very light, the third or tenor weighing only about 2½ cwts (127 kg).



# THE CHURCHES CONSERVATION TRUST

The Churches Conservation Trust is the leading charity that cares for and preserves English churches of historic, architectural or archaeological importance that are no longer needed for regular worship. It promotes public enjoyment of them and their use as an educational and community resource.

Whatever the condition of the church when the Trust takes it over its aims are, first and foremost, to put the building and its contents into a sound and secure condition as speedily as possible. Then the church is repaired so that the church is welcoming to visitors and those who attend the public events or occasional services that may be held there (Trust churches are still consecrated). Our objective is to keep it intact for the benefit of present and future generations, for local people and visitors alike to behold and enjoy.

There are over 330 Trust churches scattered widely through the length and breadth of England, in town and country, ranging from charmingly simple buildings in lovely settings to others of great richness and splendour; some are hard to find, all are worth the effort.

Many of the churches are open all year round, others have keyholders nearby; all are free. A notice regarding opening arrangements or keyholders will normally be found near the door. Otherwise, such information can be obtained direct from the Trust during office hours or from the website [www.visitchurches.org.uk](http://www.visitchurches.org.uk).

Visitors are most welcome and we hope this guidebook will encourage you to explore these wonderful buildings.

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