



THE CHURCH OF ST ANDREW AND ALL SAINTS

WILLINGALE SPAIN
ESSEX



THE CHURCHES CONSERVATION TRUST

89 Fleet Street · London EC4Y 1DH

Registered Charity No. 258612

PRICE: £1.00





THE CHURCHES CONSERVATION
TRUST WELCOMES YOU TO
THE CHURCH OF ST ANDREW
AND ALL SAINTS
WILLINGALE SPAIN, ESSEX

Many years ago Christians built and set apart this place for prayer. They made their church beautiful with their skill and craftsmanship. Here they have met for worship, for children to be baptised, for couples to be married and for the dead to be brought for burial. If you have time, enjoy the history, the peace and the holiness here. Please use the prayer card and, if you like it, you are welcome to take a folded copy with you.

Although services are no longer regularly held here, this church remains consecrated; inspiring, teaching and ministering through its beauty and atmosphere. It is one of more than 300 churches throughout England cared for by The Churches Conservation Trust. The Trust was created in 1969 and was, until 1994, known as the Redundant Churches Fund. Its object is to ensure that all these churches are kept in repair and cared for, in the interests of the Church and Nation, for present and future generations.

Please help us to care for this church. There is a box for donations or, if you prefer to send a gift, it will be gratefully received at the Trust's headquarters at 89 Fleet Street, London EC4Y 1DH (Registered Charity No. 258612).

We hope that you will enjoy your visit and be encouraged to see our other churches. Some are in towns; some in remote country districts. Some are easy and others hard to find but all are worth the effort.

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THE CHURCH OF ST ANDREW AND ALL SAINTS

WILLINGALE SPAIN, ESSEX

by CHRISTOPHER STARR

HISTORY

Long before the Normans arrived in Essex, Willingale (the 'nook of Willa's people') was an Anglo-Saxon estate in the Roding valley at the southern extremity of the Dunmow hundred. The advent of the Normans caused it to be parcelled out to several manorial lords. Later, two parishes were formed: the larger became Willingale Doe and comprised the manors of Wantons (now Wardens Hall) and Torrells Hall, and the smaller became Willingale Spain and comprised the manors of Spains Hall and Mynchyns (later Minsons).



The two Willingale churches in 1919

(ROYAL COMMISSION ON THE HISTORICAL MONUMENTS OF ENGLAND)

Both parishes took their names from early manorial proprietors, the de Ou and de Ispania families respectively, and it is probably due to their patronage that the churches of St Christopher, Willingale Doe, and St Andrew, Willingale Spain, were built. It is not known why they were placed so that their churchyards adjoined to form a single area, with St Christopher's at the north end, St Andrew's at the south and the parish boundary bisecting the ground between them, but it is said to have been the result of rivalry between two thegns or of family pride. Alternatively it may have been that, at an early date, land holdings in both parishes became fragmented, or parish boundaries so convoluted, that convenience or common sense dictated that the parish churches should be sited side by side. This position certainly provides a superb setting for them, with fine views from the churchyard across the Roding Valley. Until the benefices were united in 1929, each of the churches had its own parish priest and congregation.

St Andrew and All Saints, Willingale Spain, to give the church its full title, has, like its sister church survived a long and cyclic history of building, decay, repair and restoration; in the late 1950s, however, it had become almost ruinous and was only saved by the supporting action of the Friends of Friendless Churches. Subsequently, grants from the Friends of Essex Churches and funds raised by the Friends of St Andrew kept the church in good repair. In November 1992 it was vested in what is now The Churches Conservation Trust, to be maintained and conserved by and for the Church and the Nation. Extensive repairs were carried out between 1993 and 1995 under the supervision of Mr Simon Marks, the Trust's appointed architect for this church.

The joint dedication to St Andrew and All Saints is somewhat unusual. It is possible that the church was originally dedicated to St Andrew and that a second altar, used by a chantry priest, was dedicated to All Saints. The position of such an altar is probably indicated by the two 14th century piscina drains (one for the cleansing of the communion vessels and the other for the washing of the priest's hands) which can be seen in the sill of a window in the south wall of the nave. It may have been the Norman migrant Hervey de Ispania, who held an estate here in 1086, whose surname subsequently differentiated the parish from its northern neighbour. The present Spains Hall (built in the 15th or 16th century) could occupy the site of the original manor house of Hervey's time. It is possible



Exterior from the south-east

(RCHME)

that there was a wooden Saxon church in Willingale; but during the early 12th century, if not before, following the division of Willingale into two parishes, separate churches were built for the inhabitants. Little or nothing of the original Norman church of Willingale Doe remains, the present building having been rebuilt c.1360–70 and drastically restored, to the designs of Joseph Clarke, in 1853; but the original building in Willingale Spain survives very much intact. Almost the whole of the nave of St Andrew's dates from the 12th century and is largely unaltered. It is constructed of flint rubble with Roman tiles and bricks reused as quoins and in windows and doorways. In addition to Norman doorways on the north and south sides of the nave, both of which have plain semicircular arches of Roman tiles, there are two Norman windows in the north wall and one in the south. The chancel and bell turret are 15th century additions, whilst the vestry and south porch were built late in the 19th century.



The north door, with its ironwork from the 12th century
(BATSFORD)

Outside the church, at the south-west corner of the nave, is a plain limestone coffin-lid of the 12th century, which may possibly relate to one of the early priests of the church, or a member of the de Ispania family. This grave slab is of unusually simple design and was discovered buried in the churchyard c.1865; it was subsequently reburied and then rediscovered in 1989 during repair work on the church.

NAVE

The nave of St Andrew's is built largely of flint rubblework, with some courses of pudding-stone and quoins of Roman tile. Entry to the building is by a simple weatherboarded south porch which was probably constructed as part of the 1891–92 restoration of the church and extensively repaired a century later. The south doorway is 12th century and has a semicircular arch of reused Roman tiles; the door is modern. There are two small 12th century windows high in the north wall and opposite are windows of the 12th, 14th and 13th centuries going from west to east, the 14th century one having fine tracery. The 12th century north doorway leads to a small vestry built about 1891–92 and has a plain round-headed



Interior looking west

(CHRISTOPHER DALTON)

arch, again of reused Roman tiles. The woodwork of the door is modern but the ornate ironwork which includes foliage and grotesque heads is almost certainly contemporary with the doorway. In the west wall is a plain round-headed window possibly of the 17th century.

Much of the nave roof is covered by a plaster ceiling. At the west end are two massive 15th century posts, with two pairs of curved braces, which together carry a weatherboarded bell turret surmounted by a broach spire, an arrangement typical of many Essex churches. The bell turret appears to have been restored in 1891–92 and again about 1985. There are two mediaeval bells: one is probably by John Langhorne c.1380–1400 and is inscribed IOHANNES CRISTI CARE DINGNARE PRO NOBIS ORARE and the other, though uninscribed, is probably of similar date. They hang in a frame dated 1794. Also at the west end of the nave is a well-preserved late-14th century stone font with a 19th century oak cover. The font may have been given to the church by Clement Spice, a rich lawyer with a successful practice in London and Essex, who was lord of the manor of Willingale Spain until his death c.1420.

The pulpit, which was given in 1901 by Mrs Brocket of Spains Hall to commemorate Queen Victoria's reign, was moved from the north-east corner of the nave to its present position in 1911, when a tall box pew which stood here was modified to accommodate it. Much of the present seating in the nave was made in 1891–92 out of 18th century woodwork from former box pews. The wainscotting which lines the lower parts of the walls, and the backs of the choir stalls (which have 19th century tracery fronts and poppyhead ends), are also 18th century.

CHANCEL

The chancel, with its handsome arch, dates from the 15th century and probably replaced a smaller 12th century chancel. Its length is approximately 24 feet (7.3 m), whilst the nave is 42½ feet (12.9 m) long. The 15th century rebuilding may have been a result of the generosity of the lord of Spains Hall or of the Augustinian monks of the nearby Blackmore priory, to whom the patronage of the church had reputedly been given in 1120 by William de Hispania, son or grandson of Hervey. The gift was in return for the foundation of a chantry in the priory where prayers would be said for the de Hispania family in perpetuity. The earliest known vicar of St Andrew's is



The interior before 1911, showing the former seating and large box-pew where the pulpit now stands

Nicholas, who was priest in 1276 when he baptised Ralph, son and heir of Thomas Jocelyn, in the church. In 1398, however, the Bishop of London decided that it was appropriate for the vicarage to become a rectory so from that date priests were appointed to the living as rectors.

There are two windows in the south and north walls of the chancel and they appear to be of 15th century origin. The east window, however, with its stained glass showing the 'Suffer the Little Children to come unto Me' theme, is of mid-19th century date. The altar has a massive pre-Reformation stone mensa-slab, with a grooved and chamfered edge and recut incised crosses, symbolising the Five Wounds of Christ on the cross. It rests on a wooden framework made in 1891, but incorporating a piece of carved oak from the former rectory. The reredos also dates from 1891 and is a memorial to the Revd W R Parker, rector here from 1853 to 1890, although it was not until 1893 that it received its painted decoration. The

horizontal beam along the top of the reredos may be mediaeval. Other furnishings include a chair and a restored credence table, both of which were made in the 17th century.

The north wall of the chancel has a blocked doorway that may have led to a now-vanished sacristy. Opposite this in the south wall is a restored 15th century priest's doorway. The southernmost window in the sanctuary forms a sedilia and beside it is a reconstructed piscina with moulded jambs and a round drain. These appear to be of the 15th century. On the western jamb of the sedilia are many mediaeval graffiti, one of which depicts a bishop or archbishop whilst others depict what seem to be cross-bows. There are many later graffiti, mainly initials and dates, on the chancel arch, including one of 1944 by a USAAF armourer. The 387th Bombardment Division of the USAAF used St Andrew's as its base church while stationed in Willingale.

Long ago there was a memorial in the church consisting of a parchment surrounded by a wooden frame with folding doors, on which were painted the coats of arms of the Bewsey family, together with the names and dates of death of six of the sons of Edward Bewsey DD, rector of Willingale Spain until his death in 1642. On stone slabs set in the floor of the chancel, by the modern altar rails, are engraved brass inscription plates in memory of Isaac and Joseph Kello, who died in 1614, aged nine and 13 respectively. They were sons of Bartholomew Kello, rector of Willingale Spain from 1607, and Esther, his wife, who was a calligrapher and miniaturist of wide renown. Each of the boys has a simple epitaph. A ledger-slab in the nave floor commemorates John Markham, who died in 1757, and his wife Elizabeth, who died in 1761. A wall-plaque above the pulpit records members of the Brocket family, who were lords of the manor and lived at Spains Hall.

Three terriers (inventories) of land, goods, etc. owned by the church survive from the 17th century. One was made in 1610 'under the hands of Bartholomew Kello', another c.1630 in the time of Edward Bewsey, and the third by Anthony Nicholas in 1677. Bewsey's terrier describes the rectory as follows: '... a Parsonage-House with Barns, Stables, Hay-Houses, Mault-House and Kiln-House, with Gardens and Orchards...'. The moated site of these long-demolished buildings is about 150 metres (164 yards) south-east of the church.



Piscina in chancel (CHRISTOPHER DALTON).

Front cover: The exterior of the church from the south (CHRISTOPHER DALTON).

Back cover: The interior, looking east (CHRISTOPHER DALTON).

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