



# ST MARY'S CHURCH

BADLEY, SUFFOLK



THE CHURCHES CONSERVATION TRUST

89 Fleet Street · London EC4Y 1DH

*Registered Charity No. 258612*

PRICE: £1.00



THE CHURCHES CONSERVATION  
TRUST WELCOMES YOU TO  
ST MARY'S CHURCH  
BADLEY, SUFFOLK

*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 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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**AKENHAM, ST MARY**  
3 miles north of Ipswich off A45

**IPSWICH, ST MARY AT THE QUAY**  
Near the docks

**CLAYDON, ST PETER**  
4 miles north-west of Ipswich off A45

## ST MARY'S CHURCH

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BADLEY, SUFFOLK

by ROY TRICKER

**B**ADLEY HAS ONE OF Suffolk's most remarkable and unforgettable churches. Few of the county's 500 mediaeval churches are more remote or further from a made-up road and the situation of St Mary's is one of its most memorable features.

The visitor who perseveres along the rough track, sign-posted Badley Church, will endure a rigorous test of his car-suspension, but will enjoy a beautiful piece of Suffolk countryside and will be rewarded at the end of a mile-long journey by an absolute gem of a church, idyllically situated in a tree-studded dip, within a hedged enclosure in the middle of a meadow, without even a footpath to the field-gate which gives access to the churchyard.

Time has stood still at Badley and what can be seen here was the situation of many rural churches in times past – green meadows, trees, a farm track and, apart from the 16th-century hall to the west (reduced c.1739 to a third of its original size and with a 17th-century dovecote nearby), not a house in sight. Only the electricity pylons and the occasional aeroplane overhead serve as reminders of the 20-century world of motorways and computers. At one time a broad avenue, known as Badley Walk, linked the Hall with a road. David Elisha Davy used it on his visit to the church in 1827 and tradition has it that Queen Elizabeth I and her entourage rode along it to be entertained by the Poley family at the Hall.

Badley (originally 'Badda's Leah' – the glade belonging to Badda) has always been a tiny place. 82 people lived in its scattered parish in 1734, 84 in 1874 and less than 40 in 1974. Because of this and the remoteness of the church, in 1986 St John's at Needham Market became the parish church of Needham Market with Badley and St Mary's was vested in The Churches Conservation Trust to be preserved and conserved by and for the Church and the Nation, so that it may continue its daily ministry as a sacred, beautiful and historic building. Subsequent repairs have been carried out under the supervision of Mr Peter Cleverly and latterly of Mr Shawn Kholucy.

### THE EXTERIOR

Few visitors to St Mary's will forget their journey here, or its pastoral setting, or the charm of its country churchyard, in which a simple headstone commemorates Clark Cooper, who died in 1803, 'in the service of a friend whom he voluntarily offered to assist in concluding his harvest'.

The core of the present nave and chancel may contain parts of the church (with 14 acres of glebe) recorded in the Domesday Survey of 1086. The earliest visible features (dating from c.1180–1200) are the plain south doorway and the blocked northern lancet window in the doorway, which is rebated and has tiny holes where a shutter may have been fixed. The blocked south-east chancel window may date from the 1300s, but most of the others are Perpendicular windows, added in the 1400s, including one erected through the generosity of Richard Schyrlock (a Badley man who was buried in Norwich), whose will of 1434 bequeathed 20s.8d. for this purpose.

On the south chancel wall is a handsome monument to Henrietta Robins, a lawyer's wife from Battlesden in Bedfordshire, who died in 1728.

The south wall of the nave and chancel (which are of equal width) has been rendered and looks much the same as it did when Henry Davy



*Badley church in 1841 by Henry Davy*

made an etching of the church in 1841. The north wall, which is supported by 18th-century buttresses, reveals its flint-rubble masonry in which can be seen whole flints (some quite large), pebbles, pieces of stone, a few chunks of brown septaria from the Suffolk coast and a block of dark-brown ironstone.

Near the division of the nave and chancel on this side are the remains of the staircase which led to the former rood-loft inside. This was built into the wall of the church and, when part of it collapsed, it seems that a quick patching-up job was done and the remains were just left. Some of the Tudor brick steps remain, leading to the blocked upper entrance, and part of the lower entrance is visible behind the adjacent buttress.

The nave walls have been extended to enclose the north and south sides of the unbuttressed western tower, which is rectangular in plan and not

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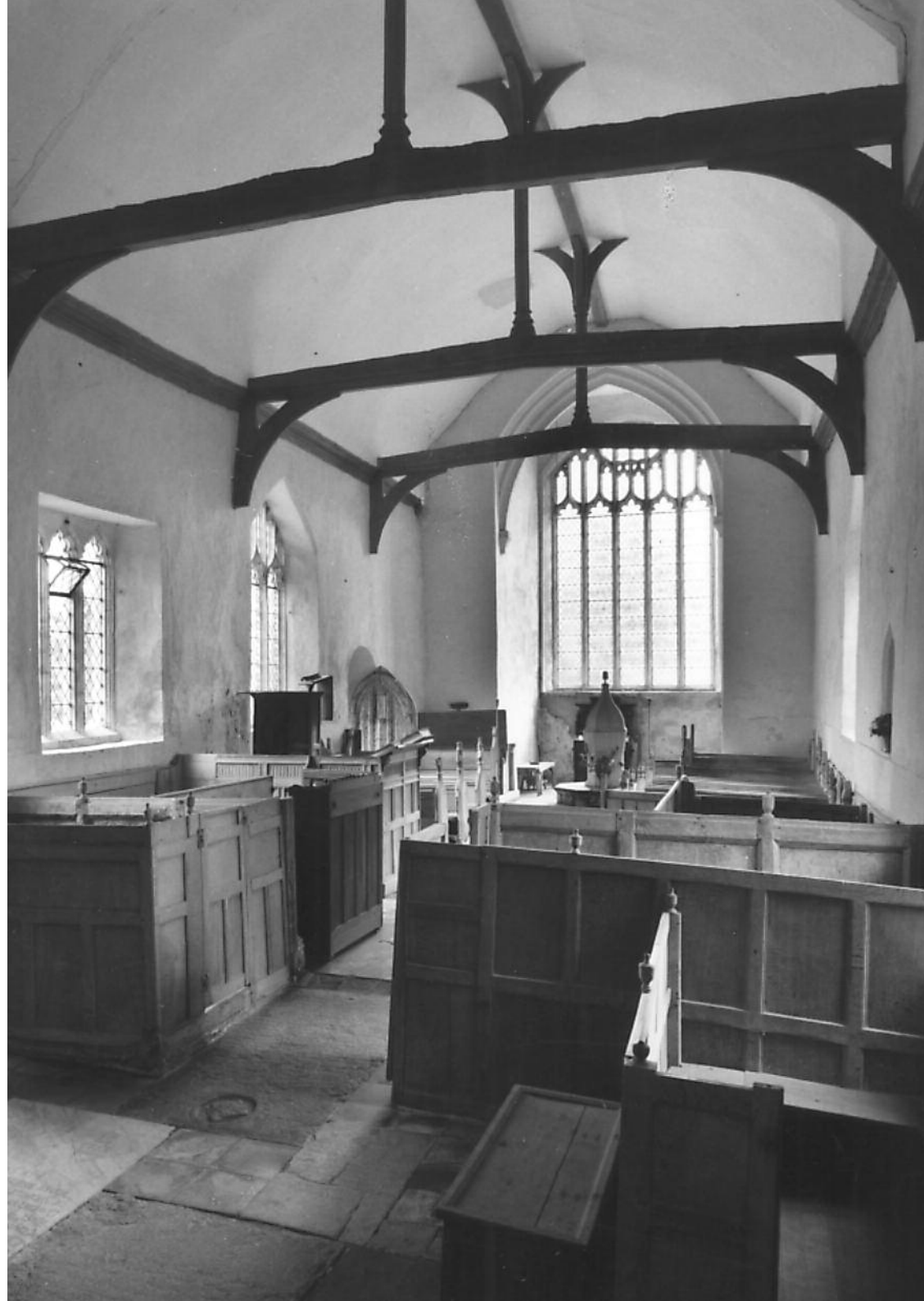
square. In its western face is the largest and grandest window in the church – a fine five-light Perpendicular example, which appears almost too large in proportion to the tower. A staircase-vice on the north side gives access to the first stage of the tower, which is lit by a small square-headed southern window. The belfry stage, with its double windows, is a 16th-century addition, or rebuilding, in Tudor brick.

The attractive wooden porch has been restored, but some of its mediaeval timbers remain. Entry to it involves lifting aside the sheep-gate stile – a rare survival which adds to the rustic charm of the church. The sturdy south door, with its curious iron grille, was made in the 15th century.

### THE INTERIOR

Suffolk has many fine and enormous churches, with lofty and ornate interiors but here, by contrast, all is simple, rustic and unpretentious; much of the woodwork has never been treated with stain or varnish and the oak has matured to a mellow grey colour. Light pours in through the clear glass of the windows, particularly the great west window. In mediaeval times, by contrast, the interior would have been a blaze of colour and carving; but in 1643, William Dowsing inspected the building to order the destruction of all 'superstitious' pictures and inscriptions. In his Journal he records his visit to Badley thus:

Feb 5th. We brake down 34 superstitious pictures, (These would have been in glass). Mr Dove promised to take down the rest (28) and to levell the chancel. We took down 4 superstitious inscriptions with 'ora pro nobis' and 'cujus animae propitietur Deus'. (These latter were on the four mediaeval brasses here). The antiquary Claude Morley, visiting the church in the early 20th century, discovered evidence of Puritan bullets in the church door.



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During the 17th century the interior was adapted to the 'plain and Prayer Book' worship of the Established Church and the box-pews, pulpit, etc. were added. Worship was centred around the preaching of the Word and Holy Communion was celebrated four times per year at the most.

When David Elisha Davy visited the church in 1827, it looked much as it does today. He did however note three mediaeval coats of arms in the windows (only one now remains) and some other fragments of ancient glass in the west window. On the east wall was the frame of a hatchment (the canvas had gone) and at the west end of the nave were a set of royal arms. The font was painted blue (a little of this 17th-century colour remains). Davy noted that in front of the communion table were placed two very rough and slight long stools or benches for the communicants to kneel against'. This may explain the absence of the 17th-century communion rails which one would expect to find here; it seems that either they disappeared very early or that there never were any – hence the make – shift apparatus mentioned by Davy, replaced by the present iron rails in the 19th century (Pevsner dates them c.1830). The only other 19th-century feature is the stained glass in the east window. In 1926 a very careful programme of repair costing £332 10s. was carried out by William Weir for the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings.

The roof is supported by king-posts which rest upon tiebeams. These may date back to the 14th century, as do several similar roofs in this part of Suffolk. The floor is paved with quarry tiles and numerous burial slabs.

The small octagonal font, standing upon its raised step, has shallow arches in its Purbeck marble bowl, indicating work of the 13th century. Its present cover may well be 18th century, but in the stonework of the bowl are traces of the device by which its mediaeval predecessor was locked to the font.



The doorway to the belfry stairway is interesting because it is about 7 ft above the floor, indicating the possible use of the tower as a place of refuge or for storing valuables; gaining entry was impossible without a ladder. Beneath the west window stands the bier, upon which coffins were transported at funerals.

In the wall just east of the door is the niche for a holy water stoup, where mediaeval people dipped their fingers and made the sign of the Cross as an act of purification. The recess in the north wall, opposite the pulpit, may have contained a statue or painting, but could well have been part of the entrance to the rood-loft stairs.

The seating in the church is a mixture of benches and box-pews. In the nave are some 15th-century benches with poppyhead ends. One on the north side has remains of animal arm-rests and another has a wheel design. Certain bench-ends have evidence of a sloping book-desk and may have been part of the return stalls with which the chancel was furnished before the box-pews arrived. The poppy-heads are all made up of differing leaf designs. The plain benches are probably 17th-century additions.

The box-pews, dating from the 17th century, were occupied by the more wealthy families who could afford to rent them. Those east of the screen are embellished with knobs and were used by the Lords of the Manor and the important families who sat in the chancel. Characteristic Jacobean carving can be seen on the pew entrance opposite the pulpit and there is more on the entrance to the reading desk and pulpit. The reading desk is commodious, although the pulpit is remarkably small. They were both equipped with red cushions and hangings, which had rotted and were removed earlier this century.

The base of the rood screen, which separated the nave and chancel, remains in place, although now much the worse for wear. It has been painted red and studded with gold stars, but this painting may not be original. Along the horizontal beam at the top are remains of wooden brattishing decoration. The knobs surmounting it are 17th-century additions. Set in the box-pews west of the screen is some traceried woodcarving which may have come from the upper parts of the screen or maybe even from the roodloft, which was approached by the now ruined staircase outside.

Two chests may be seen in the church. One is plain and dates probably from the 17th century, whilst the other has linenfold panelling, which indicates 16th-century work.

On the east wall of the sanctuary are the framed Lord's Prayer, creed and commandment boards, dating from the late 18th century. The altar itself is a carved 17th-century communion table, now covered with a colourful frontal which, with the candlesticks, is comparatively modern and made by the Warham Guild.

The stained glass in the east window was given by John Kirby Moore in 1866, in memory of his wife Henrietta. It shows the appearance of Jesus to Mary Magdalene, to his followers at Emmaus and to Thomas, after his resurrection. It was designed by Frederick Preedy of Worcester (who was also an architect and whose glass may be seen in the Suffolk churches of Tuddenham St Martin and Little Thurlow).

One piece of mediaeval glass remains in a north window, having been moved here from the east window. It depicts the arms of the de Badele family, who were lords of the manor here until the 15th century.

The partial replastering of the walls in 1994 revealed the blocked priest's doorway in the south chancel wall, also traces of mediaeval wall paintings which adorned the interior until the Reformers covered them over in the 16th century. Of particular interest is the simple masonry pattern painted on the south wall of the chancel, possibly as early as the 13th century. On the north wall opposite is a consecration cross – the sole survivor of several which marked the places where the consecrating Bishop anointed the walls with holy oil, either when the church was first consecrated or, more likely, after a major mediaeval restoration.

The tower contains three bells. The oldest was cast by Roger Reve at Bury St Edmunds about 1530 and is inscribed 'Sancte Augustine ora pro nobis'. The other two were cast in 1702 by John Goldsmith of Redgrave. Only 20 bells from Goldsmith's village bellfoundry remain, all in Norfolk and Suffolk and most near the Waveney valley, although one remained until recently at nearby Darmsden.

The small organ, with five speaking stops, was originally made by Bevington in the mid-19th century and was installed here by Boggis of Diss during the 1960s.

## MEMORIALS

On the walls and floors of the church are many memorials to people of the past who have been associated with it.

Three burial slabs have indents of brasses which were removed in 1643 by order of William Dowsing. The four mediaeval brasses in the church commemorated: (a) Edmund Alcock (1492) and his two wives; (b) Simon Poley (1485) and Margaret (née Alcock); (c) Simon's brother Edmund (1505) and Joan his wife; (d) Elizabeth Garneys of Kenton (1539).

Two handsome wall monuments can be seen in the chancel:

1. (North). A large wall monument, crowned with obelisks, commemorating Edmund Poley (1548) – grandson of Simon Poley and Margaret (née Alcock) – and Myrabel his wife (1558); also their son John (1589) and his wife Anne (daughter of Thomas, Lord Wentworth) (1589), their son Richard (1592), his wife Mary (Brews) (1593) and Richard's sister-in-law Catherine (Seckford) (1601) and Alice (Cockram) (1604), who were the two wives of Edmund Poley.
2. (South). A fine monument to Henry Poley, the last Poley of Badley, who died without issue in 1707.

In the floor are 21 burial slabs of varying descriptions, some with indents of former brasses, some with 17th-century brass inscriptions and shields. Several black ledger slabs have fine coats of arms and good lettering; others are very worn. Many of the inscriptions are in Latin and some of the epitaphs are worth pausing to read. Many commemorate members and relations of the Poley family, who held the Manor of Badley from 1491 until 1707. Amongst the more interesting of these are the following:

1. Near the font. A 13th-century coffin-shaped burial slab, with traces of an incised inscription round the border – maybe for one of the de Badele family.
2. Centre gangway. Black slab with brass inscription to Edmund Brewster (1633), sometime of Grays Inn, London.
3. Black slab with Latin inscription and three coats of arms in brass, to Edmund Poley (1613). The lower arms are Poley impaling Seckford and Cockram – his two wives (see the wall-monument, mentioned above).

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4. Small black slab with brass inscription to the infant son of a later Edmund Poley (1615).
5. West of the Communion rail, and on the north side. A large Purbeck marble slab with an inscription and two coats of arms in white marble set into it. To Peter Scrivener, son of Randolph Scrivener of Belstead Parva (1604). Inscription beneath to Randolph Scrivener (1605).

*Photographs by Christopher Dalton, and Henry Davy*  
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