

# 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 it 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 some 340 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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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Trust is grateful to the late Mr Kenneth Smith CMG and Mr Cyril Kay who provided material for this guide.

*Front cover: Exterior from the north-west (Christopher Dalton)*

*Back cover: Detail of the reredos (Christopher Dalton)*



## HOLY TRINITY OLD CHURCH

Bothenhampton,  
Dorset



*Bothenhampton, Dorset*

# HOLY TRINITY OLD CHURCH

*by Kenneth Smith*

## HISTORY

Bothenhampton (formerly often spelt, and sometimes still pronounced, Baunton, and meaning 'village of the dwellers in the valley') was linked throughout the Middle Ages with the nearby parish of Loders, where in the 13th century there was a Priory belonging to the Abbey of St Mary, Montburgh, in Normandy. Bothenhampton church was a chapel-of-ease to the Priory. In 1414 the Priory of Loders, along with other 'alien priories', was suppressed, and its lands, including those at Bothenhampton, were transferred to the great nunnery of Syon near Twickenham. The link with Loders survived the dissolution of the monasteries in 1539 by 300 years. Births and deaths were registered at Loders until 1733. In that year the exact status of Bothenhampton church was in doubt and the Bishop of Bristol demanded of the villagers that they dig for human remains before granting them a licence to continue burials in the chapel yard. Bothenhampton was joined to Walditch in 1927.

*Exterior from the east  
(Christopher Dalton)*



*Interior looking east (Christopher Dalton)*

In the 1880s the parishioners decided that their church was too decayed and too small, and secured a faculty to demolish most of the old church and to build a new and larger one half a mile (0.8 km) away. The foundation stone was laid in 1887 and the new church consecrated in 1890. All that remains of the old church is the chancel and the two-stage tower and part of the north-west corner of the nave wall. For some time the chancel was used as a mortuary chapel as the churchyard remained in use for burials. However, in 1971 the old church, which had long been out of regular use and was in need of extensive repair, was declared formally redundant, and in the following year it passed into the care of the Redundant Churches Fund (now The Churches Conservation Trust) for preservation.

A substantial programme of repairs was carried out on behalf of the Trust by E Bailey and Sons (Beaminster) Ltd under the direction of Mr Kenneth Wiltshire, architect, and in 1975 the Trust was awarded a Certificate of Commendation for the conservation work to the building, under the scheme of Awards which was administered in connection with European Architectural Heritage Year.

## THE CHURCH

The chancel was probably built in the 14th century and the arch connecting it to the tower is of this date. The walls are of local rubble. The principal feature of interest is the early-18th-century sanctuary, with oaken altar rails, dado and reredos all designed as a single unit.

The reredos, with pediment and urn, incorporates the Creed, Commandments and the Lord's Prayer, all the lettering of which was carefully restored in 1974. The floor is paved with square slabs of grey slate and white marble. At the west end of the chancel is a blocked door, which formerly gave access through the thickened north wall to the rood screen that would have spanned the arch between the chancel and the now-vanished nave.

The font, with its circular bowl and splayed underside, probably dates from the first founding of a chapel on this site, and is 13th century or earlier.

The tower was built in the 15th century and is of two stages, with embattled parapet and gargoyles. The single 19th-century bell is by Barwell of Birmingham.

The roof of the chancel consists of stone tiles on heavy oak rafters.

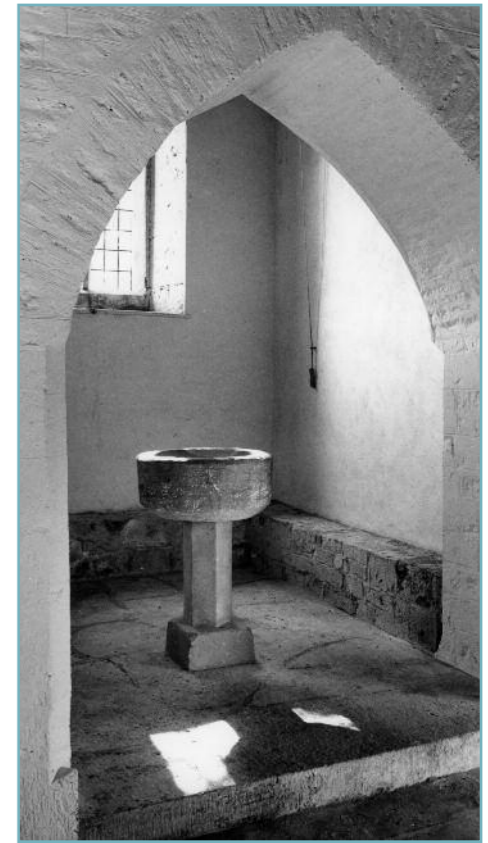
The churchyard has some pleasing chest tombs of the 18th and 19th centuries and some characteristic headstones incorporating the weeping willow motif, popular throughout the 19th century. One such stands near the gate to the churchyard and its inscription reads:

*Thomas Roots Jarvis*

*Drowned by the stranding of  
the Ship Dessert Flower of  
Liverpool on the Long Bank off  
Wexford on the 4th March 1864*

*He sunk no human power his life could save  
No hand could snatch him from his watery grave  
A grave indeed he little thought to find  
When England and his friends he left behind.*

From the eastern boundary of the churchyard there is a fine view stretching across unspoilt country towards Shipton Gorge and, westwards, to the hills that encircle Bridport.



*The font (Christopher Dalton)*

## THE NEW CHURCH

The new church of Holy Trinity stands at the western edge of the old village, with its attractive high pavement. It was designed by E S Prior, with W H Lethaby, a founder of the Art Workers' Guild, and the latter contributed the altar frontal in gesso (usually concealed by an altar cloth). Prior was an original, even eccentric, architect and his concern for texture is here well shown in his use of local 'forest marble' and blue stone. The most notable feature is the construction of the nave which is spanned by three great transverse arches. Nearly 20 years later Prior was to use the same feature in the building of St Andrew's, Roker, County Durham.