

The written records generated by these parish responsibilities provide evidence about many aspects of local history and also give an insight into people's lives. The Southchurch Parish Account book for 1682-1704 has a note in the front 'Ye shall have poor always wth you' and records the provision that was made. In 1683-4, for example, the parish paid 2s 6d for a midwife 'to Goody Goosetree a stranger', and in 1700 'Jacob the blind man' received regular payments of 1s a week. In 1819, the Vestry agreed that the paupers in the workhouse, including children, should attend the parish church, and would not be allowed to attend 'any dissenting place of worship'. In 1821 a Select Vestry, or executive committee, was appointed and took a close interest in the cost of maintaining the poor. In April 1821 it was agreed that the inhabitants of the poor house should make as many of their own clothes as possible, including straw hats and bonnets. All stockings and petticoats must be yellow, and shoes made to the same pattern. The 'Frocks & Trowzers' for the men and boys were to be made of 'Duck all alike'. Very personal matters were discussed and recorded: in March 1830 Mrs Nolan was allowed one pair of stays, two aprons, two caps and a skirt and Master Nolan one pair of stockings and two neck handkerchiefs.

Prayer has been offered on this spot for over a thousand years. During your visit, we invite you to find a few moments to be still and quiet and to absorb the peaceful atmosphere of this beautiful ancient building, where God has been worshipped and the Christian faith proclaimed for generations.

Whether you have never prayed before, or you are used to speaking with God, you will have **something to thank him for**, and some **special needs to bring before him**. Prayer is not only talking to God, but also listening to him and allowing him to speak to you.

Before you leave, please pray for this church and for all who serve and worship here.

A copy of the full history of Holy Trinity is available at the back of the Church. Alternatively please do check out our website for more information about the life of our community and also for full digital versions of all these leaflets.

www.holytrinitysouthchurch.org



LOTTERY FUNDED



A SHORT HISTORY

Welcome to Holy Trinity, Southchurch

A church has stood on this site for well over a thousand years. There would have been an original wooden church here no later than the 9th century, but the oldest parts of the current church date back to around 1150.

Holy Trinity is an historical gem and speaks of the way people have been worshipping God here for countless generations. Today we are a friendly and growing community of all ages that seeks to make the love of God known to all in Southchurch and beyond.

The following material is extracts from a history of Holy Trinity, written by Janet Root. Details for the full history are at the end of this leaflet.

In the words of an anonymous writer in 1924:
'The Church of the Holy Trinity is in itself an epitome of the history of the parish, and indeed of the whole surrounding neighbourhood. Untouched for centuries, except so far as necessary repairs had to be made, it is now three times its original size, and is still incomplete.'

The Church

The church is a Grade II* Listed building. The 'old' church has twelfth-century origins, and the south doorway dates from this period. The original north doorway, of a similar design, was rebuilt in 1906 as the west doorway to the new nave. The chancel was rebuilt in the thirteenth century and has a rare fourteenth-century Easter Sepulchre in the north wall. This is a locker used to contain the Host from Good Friday to Easter Day, representing Christ's burial after the crucifixion. The

fifteenth-century timber belfry at the west end of the nave, which has recently been repaired, is supported on a heavy timber frame inside the church. This is a characteristic local feature and there are more than 100 timber-framed belfries and bell towers in Essex. The county has no freestone and timber was used because it was the most readily available and economic building material.

The church interior was refitted in the eighteenth century, but this work was almost entirely erased when the building was restored by the London architect William Slater in the 1850s. The Rector, the Revd William Vallance, took a close interest in the mediaeval building but the restoration was inevitably a product of its time, and it is difficult now to appreciate how much the church was altered. For example, roughcast was removed from the exterior and many coats of whitewash stripped from the doorcase mouldings. The congregational seating at Southchurch is very similar to that designed by Slater for the church of St John the Baptist, Devizes in Wiltshire in the late 1850s. Slater had a fairly extensive practice in Essex and was also responsible for the former Southchurch National School and teacher's house adjoining the church, built in 1851 and enlarged in 1894. His work at Southchurch epitomises the endeavours of the Church of England at this period in education and the provision of seats for all in church.

Holy Trinity was greatly extended from 1906 in response to dramatic growth in the local population in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as an alternative to building a new church. This provoked considerable debate about the philosophy of building conservation and drew negative comment from the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings. The new work was designed by Ninian Comper and later by F C Eden, both nationally-important architects representing the last phase of the Gothic Revival. Surviving documents show that both Comper and Eden intended to create a more elaborate interior than circumstances allowed. The new nave, part of a north aisle and the vestry were built to the designs of Ninian Comper c1906-9, and the new chancel was added to a different design by F C Eden in 1931. The church interior was fitted out in the 1930s and 1950s, largely by the prominent church architects Carøe & Partners, but the enlargement scheme remains incomplete.

Southchurch was granted to Christchurch, Canterbury, traditionally by Leofstan, a Saxon thegn, in the late Saxon period, and the manor of Southchurch was listed as the property of the monks at Canterbury in Domesday Book. The Southchurch property was tenanted and by custom its occupants adopted the name 'de Southchurch' until the death of Sir Peter de Southchurch in 1309. Southchurch Hall is a Grade I Listed thirteenth-century manor house with earlier origins which is of particular interest because of its early date. The Southchurch property was seized at the dissolution and granted to the new Dean and Chapter of Canterbury as part of their endowments in 1542, but they were soon compelled to exchange it for property elsewhere and the Manor of Southchurch was granted to Richard, Lord Rich. It subsequently descended through a succession of private owners.

Until the late nineteenth century Holy Trinity was the parish church of a small settlement which had a population of 291 and only 36 inhabited houses in 1801. In 1835, the village was described as 'small, and chiefly inhabited by families engaged in agricultural occupations'. The population rose slowly to reach 494 in 1861, and then as a result of the growth of Southend nearly doubled to 932 in 1891 and increased by almost as much again to 1622 in 1901. In 1906, the occupation of most men in the parish was said to be housebuilding, and the spread of housing in the parish can be traced from a sequence of historic maps.

Church of England parishes were formerly the basis of civil as well as ecclesiastical administration, and financial responsibility for the upkeep of churches was inextricably bound up with local government and the provision of public services. Before the Local Government Act of 1894, parishes were responsible for the upkeep of the church and the provision of accommodation in it for the parishioners, for providing adequate room for burials, for roads, bridges, maintenance of the poor and law and order. These responsibilities were administered through the Vestry, a body which included all parishioners who were liable to pay the rates for poor relief and were accordingly entitled to vote at Vestry meetings. Those who did not attend these meetings were bound by the decisions of those who did.