

## *A Short History of St. Mary's. Little Hallingbury.*

How can you have a short history of a building that is about 1000 years old ? I think this is impossible so I will just talk about some of the facts that we know.

Basically we can see this is a Norman church, but did a church exist before Norman times? Little Hallingbury has a mention in the Domesday Book, this is a survey of England in 1086.

"Martel Holds (Little) Hallingbury from Geoffrey, which Asgar held before 1066 as a manor, for 1 hide. Then 2 ploughs in lordship, now 1. Then 1 priest and 1 villager with 20 acres which belonged to the church; but now they are not appurtenant to the church."

I think it is quite possible to believe that the first church on this site was built by the Saxons, maybe 20 or 30 years before 1066. Over the years with all the alterations and extensions there has never been any other mention of evidence to this earlier building. When Adrian Gibson visited the church he pointed out that some pieces of ferricrete had been used in the flint stone work. This ferricrete (small pebbles stuck together with iron rusting) was used in large quantities in the building of Saxon churches. When these churches were rebuilt by the Normans they reused some of this material, so this maybe another clue. The walls were built using field stone and mortar with roman tile and brick taken from local sites.

The Nave of the church is Norman there would have been a small chancel, but the larger chancel that we have today was added in the C13. The Chancel roof was rebuilt during the early C16 and is a false hammer beam roof.

The side aisle was added in the early C19 to accommodate the growing population. Mr Pritchett, F.S.A. prepared the plans. At the same time much restoration work was carried out both inside and outside and a small vestry was added.

Originally the church had a two arched turret for two bells, one of the bells was founded in 1450 . At the beginning of the 18th century a third bell was added and it was necessary to build a turret and shingled spire. The weather vane bears the date 1712. On the 25th of June 1900 the spire was struck by lightning causing considerable damage to the spire and roof. Mr Pritchett again prepared plans for a new design. £150 was the estimate for the work and subscriptions were asked for (see letter)

The porch, depending on who you listen to dates either 14th or 16th century, it is however a very fine porch and on theory is that it may have been a Lytch gate at one time and moved to its present position as a porch. If you look very carefully at the back of the south door you will see taper burns, these were possibly put there in the belief that they would keep away evil and protect against fire.