All Saints, Sutton

All Saints Church is a Grade I listed building which was built in the late 12th century or early 13th century and was then modified substantially in 14th, 15th and 16th centuries, with the first Rector listed as being Master Adam of Clanfield 1215-1220.

The building sits in an elevated position to the west of the Sutton ford and has been constructed in several phases, including construction using coursed rubble, cobblestones and sandstone/ironstone with ashlar dressings, and ashlar repairs to the tower.

The church contains some medieval graffiti of a man with an emblem on his chest, as well as glaziers signatures and etchings on the church windows.

The church has had a number of notable clergy, including the Reverend Edward Stillingfleet who became vicar of Sutton in 1657, and who later went on to become: Royal Chaplain; Dean of St Pauls; and Bishop of Worcester. Stillingfleet wrote several influential articles and books on Anglicanism; he became a leader in the Church of England; was a frequent speaker in the House of Lords and had considerable influence as a churchman. Less favourable was the infamous Reverend Edward Drax Free who: was appointed in 1808; allegedly stole the lead off his own church roof to sell for scrap; impregnated several of his housekeepers; allowed swine to desecrate the graveyard; and had been publicly abusive when both sober and drunk. His downfall finally came when he attempted to have the churchwarden, Montagu Burgoyne, fined for non-attendance at church using a law passed during the reign of Elizabeth I, this ultimately resulted in Drax Free being deprived of his living in 1830.

All Saints Church has a working barrel organ, contains several memorials to the Burgoyne family and the flag from HMS Captain. Captain Hugh Talbot Burgoyne V.C. the ship's commander was killed when the ship capsized off Cape Finisterre during a gale on 7th September 1870; Burgoyne Bay in British Columbia, Canada is named after him.

INTERESTING FEATURES OF THE CHURCH

1 - Symcotts Memorial Tablet:
This commemorates John and Elizabeth Symcotts who were married for 55 years. Elizabeth died in 1646 aged 88 and John in 1649 aged 84.

2- Hat rests:
Under the pew seats towards the rear of the church will be found hat rests for the men to use.

3 - List of Rectors and Patrons:
This starts in 1215 and is complete to 1983 when the Parish became part of the Benefice of Potton with Sutton and Cockayne Hatley. Patrons have included the Bishop of Lincoln and six Kings of England, in their capacity as head of the Duchy of Lancaster, of which Sutton became a part in 1398.

Probably the most notorious of the Rectors was Edward Drax Free, Rector from 1808 until 1830 when he was displaced. His crimes included lewdness, indecency, fighting in church, keeping pigs in the churchyard and fodder in the porch, and selling lead off the chancel roof.

In direct contrast were Edward Stillingfleet, Rector from 1658-64 who later became Dean of St Paul's and Bishop of Worcester; and George Herbert Box, Rector from 1909 to 1930 and Professor of Hebrew and the Exegesis of the Old Testament of King's College, London.

4 - Bates Sacred Barrel Organ (on balcony):
This is the only working organ of its kind in
Bedfordshire and on of a very small number in the whole country. It has three barrels with 10 tunes each. Five stops allow considerable tonal variation.

5 - Flag from HMS Captain:
This flag came from HMS Captain commanded by Hugh Talbot Burgoyne, which sank on its third voyage. Voyages lasted weeks and the flag probably needed regularly replacing. You can find out more at www.hmscaptain.co.uk

6 - Brass plates and cross (in floor):
Inscribed in memory of Thomas Burgoyne and his wife Elizabeth.

7 - Corbels supporting roof trusses:
Careful examination will show the corbel by the north door to be decorated with a cat playing a harp. To the right of Sir John's monument is another corbel, decorated with a winged dragon. Both are 14th Century.

8 - Memorial to Sir John Burgoyne 1604:
This is carved stone and is in urgent need of repair. Sir John was member of Parliament from 1562-3 and died an old, blind man in 1604, one year after the death of Queen Elizabeth I. The life-sized effigy in armour is flanked by columns carrying a pediment with heraldic decoration.

An example of medieval graffiti ("A Scythian Warrior") found on the centre north aisle pillar

9 - Memorial to Sir Roger Burgoyne 1618-77:
Sir Roger was member of Parliament for Bedfordshire in the Short and Long Parliaments. The memorial was carved by the great Grinling Gibbons and is technically described as "containing urns on strigillated sarcophagus with putti left and right". (Close by is the 1709 reredos type of monument to Sir John Burgoyne with mourning cherubs carved by E Stanton.)

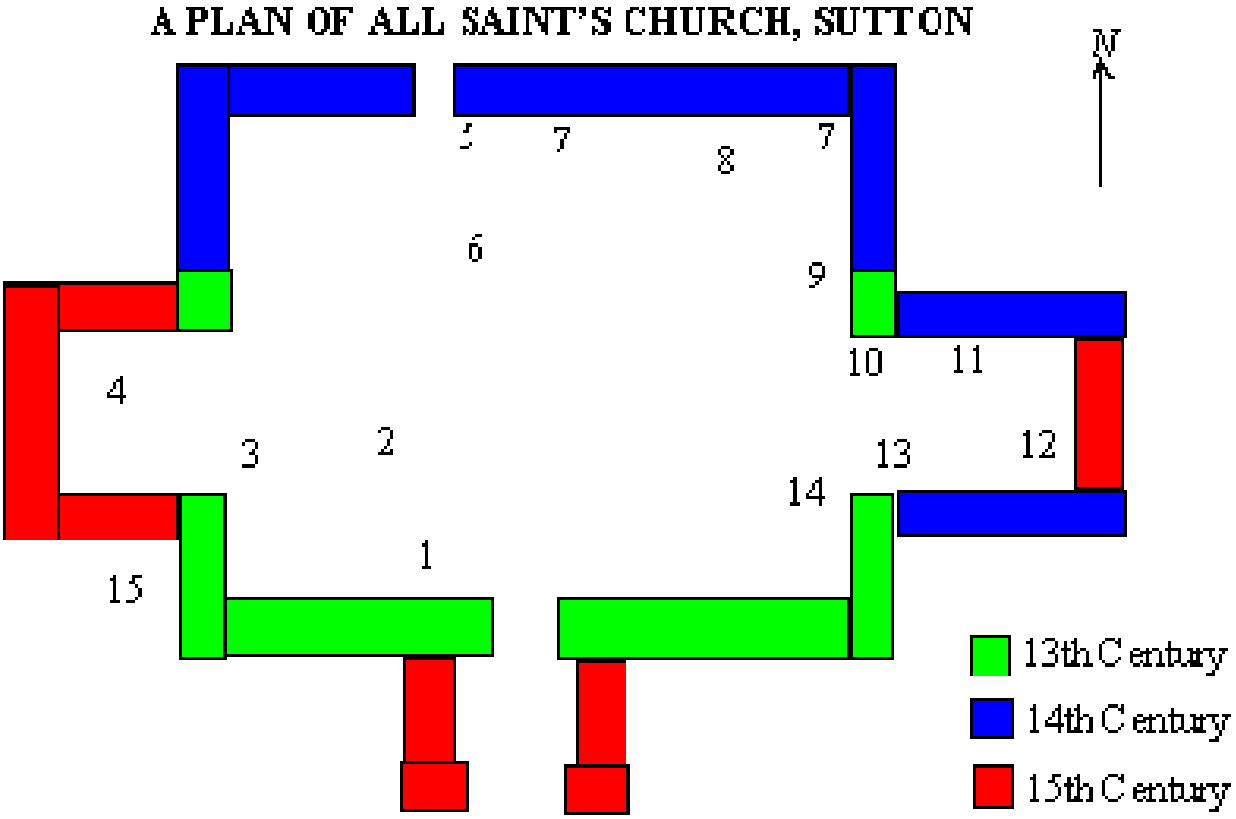
10 - **Chancel Screen:**
Carved in the 14th or 15th Century, the screen is believed to have come from another church in Bedfordshire, possibly St John the Baptist's Church, Cockayne Hatley. It has a modern cornice or projecting upper part.

11 - Mediaeval chest:
This fine, 17th Century chest with ornamental lock plate held registers for many years.

12 - Piscina:
Two stone basins originally used to receive water with which the priest washed the Communion vessels.

13 - Sedilia:
These are seats for the priest, cut into the chancel wall. The have ogee heads, ie a double curve, are crocketed - decorated in the arch - and have carved finials (above the arch).

14 - Pulpit:
Jacobean, dated 1628 and reputed to have been carved by a former Rector - presumably Oliver Bowles, Rector from 1606 to 1645.

Cremation Area:
(Outside) Set aside for the burial of cremated remains.

This plan of the church will allow you to cross reference the features above