

INTRODUCTION

Saint Dunstan's is known locally as the 'Cathedral of The Weald' because of its size and splendour. It is not a true cathedral but a large and impressive parish church. It reflects the wealth of Flemish weavers who settled in Cranbrook in the 1330s and sparked a rich 250-year period of local prosperity and growth.

The stone building you see today largely dates back to 1550 but a church has been on the site from as early as the 11th century. A gradual, piecemeal programme of extension and refurbishment over four centuries culminated in the magnificent structure you see today.

Highlights of any visit to St Dunstan's include the beautiful stained-glass windows, magnificent medieval green men carvings, a unique total immersion font, some fascinating connections to early American settlers and extraordinary gothic architecture.

THE WEALD

The word weald means forest and this area, between the North and South Downs, was heavily wooded throughout antiquity and used mainly for pig farmers, swineherds, to feed their animals on the woodland floor.

Over time small settlements grew around the pig pastures, or dens, and the likes of Benenden, Biddenden and Swattenden owe their establishment to these original roots. But Cranbrook, derived from crane brook, is a later settlement that first appears in the historical record around the same time as the first St Dunstan's was built.

The popularity of St Dunstan peaked in the 11th century when, it is thought, St Dunstan's Church was built on Wealden land at Cranbrook owned by the monks of Christchurch, Canterbury.



ABOUT THE FRIENDS OF ST-DUNSTAN'S

We aim to preserve the church for the community as a place of Christian worship and to promote knowledge and understanding of its architecture and history.

Since 1996 we have held more than 160 events. Our monthly lunchtime recitals and annual Great Cranbrook Quiz have become much-loved local traditions.

We have contributed towards providing windows, restoring the South Porch and repairing the Nave Roof and heating system.

Our next aim is a major contribution to the restoration of the tower stonework.

We have about 140 members and welcome all who share our aims, whether local, visitors, lovers of churches or people with Cranbrook connections. Members decide their own annual subscription.

We have raised £150,000 in 14 years and have just received a grant from the **Heritage Lottery Fund** to help with educational and promotional work.

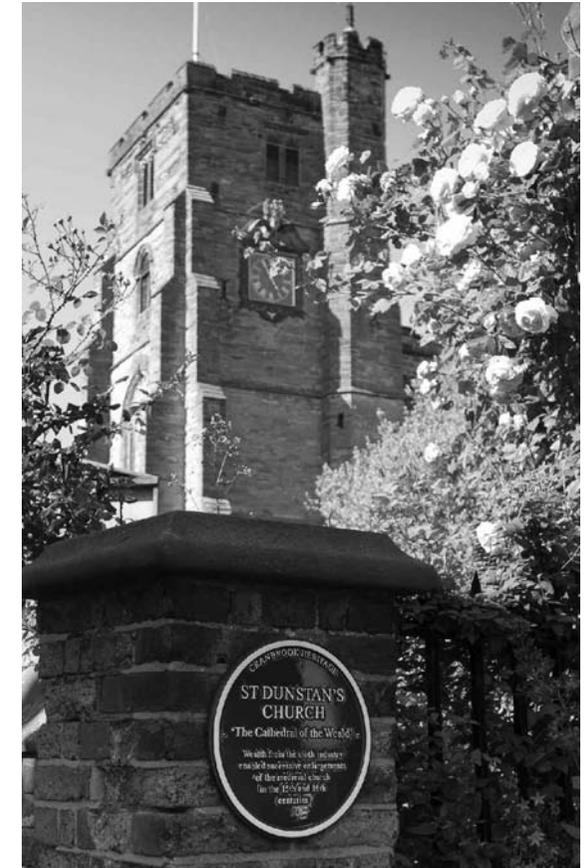
We were founded in 1996 and became a Registered Charity in 2007, Charity Number 1126417.

**Membership enquiries to the secretary:
Tony Allison 01580 713006 or info@fostd.org**



A QUICK TOUR OF ST-DUNSTAN'S CHURCH

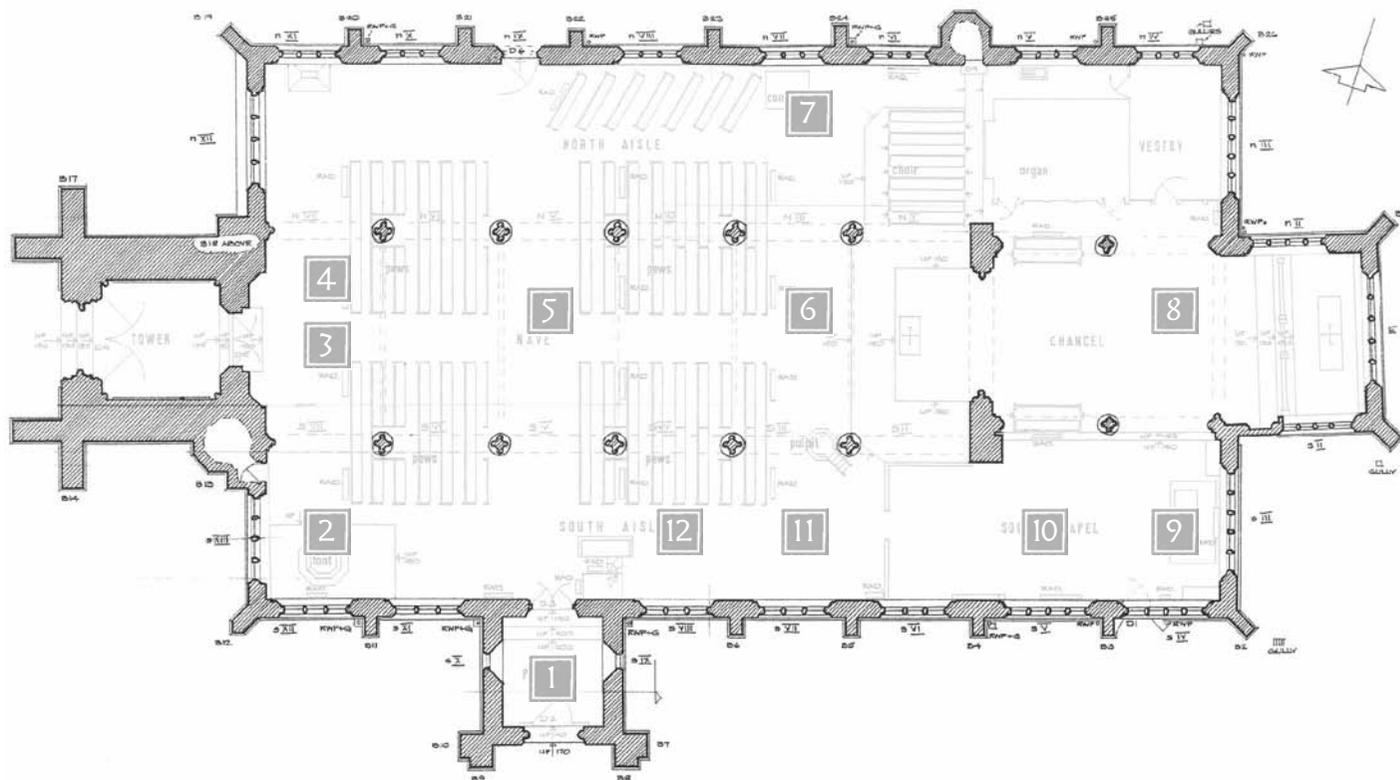
Cranbrook, Kent



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THE CHURCH

- 1 The parvise is a small room above the porch. It was used as a priest's room, storage room and, in 1554, a prison cell. A protestant prisoner was detained here and taken away to be burned. Known locally as 'Baker's Jail'.
- 2 The font is Victorian, from 1852, an example of early Victorian Gothic and made from Caen stone. The carved white marble figure beyond shows Thomas Webster, the local artist, and is by Hamo Thornycroft. The Alexander Window was installed in 1906 by Col Alexander of Swifts in memory of his wife and three children.
- 3 The Tower was built around 1425, with its upper storey added about a hundred years later. It is 98 feet (almost 30m) high. The clock mechanism is the prototype for Big Ben and was made by the Dent Company. Installed in 1855.
- 4 The Green Men are four circular oak shields with elaborate carving that date from the late 13th or early 14th century and are pagan in origin. Originally these four were roof-bosses inside the chancel.
- 5 The pillars, arches and clerestory windows (these are the ones in the topmost level of the nave). All early 16th century. The candelabra is thought to date from around 1700 and is of iron and brass.
- 6 The nave roof was rebuilt in 1868 as an exact replica of the Tudor roof that was damaged in a collapse of 1725. The lectern features a magnificent brass eagle and dates to 1866. It is a memorial to Rev J Allan, a headmaster of Cranbrook School.
- 7 The Guilford window traces its history back to around 1520. This glass was removed from the East Window in 1861 to make way for a new installation.



- 8 The chancel floor shows several intriguing indentations left by lost brasses and a Roberts brass from the 17th century. The organ contains parts originally built by Henry Wills for the Great Exhibition of 1851 at the Crystal Palace. The East window behind the altar is Cranbrook's memorial to Queen Victoria and was installed in 1906.
- 9 This area was dedicated to St Thomas a Becket but was restored as a side chapel in the 20th century. Near the altar you will find the Sheafe brass. Thomas Sheafe, who died in 1520, was a leading clothier
- 10 This area has many connections with the Roberts family of Glassenbury and features a memorial family tree on the outside wall commissioned by the Duchess of St Albans.
- 11 The banner of St Dunstan was made by local schoolchildren to celebrate 1000 years since the patron saint's death. The memorial to surgeon Dr Comfort Starr shows he was baptised in Cranbrook but died in Boston, New England in 1659. He was an early benefactor of Harvard.
- 12 At the top of the steps leading to the parvise a wooden cover conceals a very rare total immersion font from 1710. The Eddy Memorial comprises marble plaques commemorating the life of Rev William Eddy, vicar from 1592 to 1616, paid for by Boston's Robert Henry Eddy, one of his American descendents.

For more information contact the Friends of St Dunstan's:
info@fostd.org