

St Peter & St Paul Ewhurst



A Visitor's Guide to our Parish Church

PLEASE TAKE ONE

This beautiful building is dedicated to God
Please help us to keep it worthy of Him
Any donation you can give will be much appreciated
Please place your donation in the
Church Model Collection Box by the font
using the envelopes provided

Or make a BACS transfer to
'St Peter & St Paul Ewhurst'
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Much of this guide is based upon the work of the late W McG Eager whose booklet on the church was published in 1958 and that by Janet Balchin of Ewhurst History Society, whose book "St Peter & St Paul, A Guide and History" was published in 2012. I gratefully acknowledge both of these authors. Notes on more recent events are the work of the writer. The cover drawing by Dr A V Coverley-Price is reproduced from the cover of W McG Eager's booklet. Copies of "St Peter & St Paul, A Guide and History" can be obtained by contacting Ewhurst History Society on www.ewhursthhistory.com.

John White

Ewhurst, November 2025

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HISTORICAL NOTES

Ewhurst is not mentioned in the Domesday survey of 1086. The area was part of the Manor of Gomshall but probably sparsely inhabited. It is likely that the original church was built in the late 11th or early 12th century as the new Norman lords were ordered to do acts of penance and many built and endowed churches. The building appears to have been rectangular, consisting of the present nave and a chancel in the area that is now the crossing under the tower. The building was enlarged sometime in the 13th century when the present cruciform shape was laid out and there have been many subsequent changes over the centuries.

The first documentary reference to the church is in 1179 when it is described as the church of *'Iuherst'* in a list of property of Merton Priory and there is record of Ewhurst being a parish church in 1291. Patronage of the benefice (the right to appoint a priest) was held by Merton Priory until 1538 when, upon Dissolution of the Monasteries under Henry VIII, it passed to the Crown. Patronage remains with the monarch represented by the Lord Chancellor.

THE PRESENT DAY

The ancient parish served by this church had barely changed since Medieval times; it stretched from Pitch Hill in the north to the Sussex border in the south and included part of Holmbury Hill, Ellens Green, Baynards and the Surrey portion of Cox Green. By the end of 2017 it served a population of about 2600. A major change took place in January 2018 when the villages of Oakwood Hill, Walliswood and Forest Green, served by the churches of St John the Baptist Okewood and Holy Trinity Forest Green, joined with Ewhurst to become the Parish of Ewhurst with Okewood and Forest Green with a combined population of about 4000. Later in 2018, Revd. Clare Shepherd became the first woman to hold the post of Rector in the expanded parish. However, in the summer of 2025, Ewhurst regained its former boundary to become the Parish of Ewhurst and Ellens Green.

Ewhurst church has preserved registers of births, marriages and deaths since 1614 and those covering the years up to modern times can be found in the Surrey History Centre at Woking. They make interesting reading and some of the families recorded in the early days still live, or have relatives, in the village.

INSIDE THE CHURCH

The **FONT** is 12th century and its crude workmanship and design would lead to the supposition that it is probably of local origin. It was restored in 2011 to remedy cracking to the original bowl and work was also carried out to the modern base. Although always at the west end of the church, its position has been changed more than once.

During the works in the late 1830s, the large perpendicular window in the west wall replaced a simpler 15th century window. At the same time, the south doorway was bricked up and the **WEST DOOR** (through which you entered) became the main entrance. Forty years later, the west door was taken out of use and the south door re-opened; a timber gallery (from where it would have been usual for musicians to accompany sung parts of the service) was demolished and an organ was installed in front of the west door. A small vestry was formed in the northwest corner of the nave in place of stairs leading to the gallery. The west door was again restored to use in 1902 with the removal of the organ into the chancel.

The **NAVE** is the oldest part of the church. Parts are of late 11th or early 12th century origin although alterations were made late in the 15th century and again in the 16th century with further work being carried out in 1838/9 (of which more later). The vaulted nave roof dates from the late 16th century and at that time a number of the nave windows were altered, there now being an interesting mixture of workmanship from Norman times to the 19th century. The central window in the north wall is believed to be of 12th century origin, but it has been much altered. The two stained glass windows on the north wall are both 20th century work, the Miller window (on the left) being installed in 1998. On the walls of the nave are four 17th century tablets enclosed in handsome frames and inscribed with the Ten Commandments and the Beatitudes. The present oak pews were installed in 1879.

Standing under the **TOWER**, you are now in the part of the church where the original chancel stood until the early 13th century when the church was extended with the addition of a chancel at the east end and two transepts to form the present cruciform shape. The chancel was rebuilt in 1838/9 when, whilst repairs were being carried out to strengthen the foundations of the tower which had begun to lean, the tower collapsed in the summer of 1837, taking with it almost all the chancel and probably much of the north transept as well.

The four arches holding the tower are thought to have been much altered during this rebuilding. Plaster facings to the arches were removed in 1931 to reveal the stonework and several windows were similarly treated.

Above you, the **BELFRY** contains a clock dating from 1841 (renovated in 1991) and a ring of eight bells - one of only a few country churches in the district having a "full" peel. Four of the bells pre-date the collapse of the tower (they were probably removed before work started); two of the older bells are of medieval origin being dedicated to St Peter and St John and two date from 1671. Two additional bells were cast in 1839 and a further two in 1938. The two medieval bells were replaced in 2017; one being rehung to act as a 'service bell'.

The **NORTH TRANSEPT** dates originally from the 13th century but was substantially rebuilt in 1838/9. It is divided from the body of the church by a screen on which are inscribed all the known Rectors of Ewhurst since 1242 although the first record of Ewhurst being a parish does not appear until 1291. The screen dates from the 17th century, having originally formed the small vestry in the northwest corner of the nave and before that a second pulpit. The organ pipes were installed in 1980. The vestry and belfry are locked (except when in use) but for visitors who are particularly interested, access can be obtained by prior arrangement with the Parish Office (see back page) or after services.

The **PULPIT** is particularly interesting, being a good example of post Reformation Jacobean woodwork, being made in the early 17th century. The eagle **LECTERN** was carved by Mr R Bacon of Crawley as a memorial to Major F O Philpott, a churchwarden who died in 1964.

Proceeding into the **CHANCEL**, this again dates from the late 1830s. On the north wall is the modern organ console which was resited into an alcove in 1996 having been moved from the South Transept back into the position it held during the first part of the 20th century. The altar table is late 17th century with fluted legs. The altar rails are a good example of early 18th century work and were brought, along with tablets in the nave, from Baynards in 1879 as a gift of The Revd. Thomas Thurlow.

The altar kneeler deserves mention being made by the ladies of the church's Needlework Guild in the mid-1980s. It is regarded nationally as being of the highest quality and has been featured in a number of publications along with the cushions on the Bishop's Chair (kept in the vestry) and the kneelers in the body of the church which are of the

same origin. More recently, the Guild completed cushions and kneelers with a musical theme for the choir stalls.

Turning around and going into the **SOUTH TRANSEPT**, you enter possibly the most interesting area of the church. The 13th century work best survives here and of particular interest are the arches around the three lancet windows. The arms in the south window are of Onslow (sometime Lord of the Manor), Thurlow (of Baynards) and Stewart (Rector from 1811 to 1844). These panes were installed in the east window of the Chancel until the insertion of the Frecheville memorial window. The transept was restored following damage in 1838/9 but the small panes of slightly tinted glass in the 15th century window in the east wall have been attributed to the early glass making works at Chiddingfold, West Sussex. The roof is of 16th century date, restored in Victorian times. The south transept door was exposed during renovation work in 1931.

In 1996, pews similar to those in the rest of the church were removed; the floor tiles in the Centre were re-laid in the position of the former aisle with new tiles laid over the earth floor which was found under the pew decking. Disappointingly, little interest was found during this work as the floor had been disturbed at least twice during the 20th century.

During 1991 and early 1992 considerable work was carried out internally to the whole church, including new lighting, redecoration and the installation of a new gas-fired central heating boiler. In 1999, restoration work was carried out to the nave roof beams to eradicate death watch beetle. The John Betjeman Award was presented by the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings for this work.

OUTSIDE

As has been noted, much of the church is newer than one might assume at a first glance. The nave is of Norman origin, but alterations have been made through the ages, best seen by looking at the wide diversity of window design. The south transept is mainly 13th century but the tower, chancel and much of the north transept date from 1838/9 as do the buttresses to the nave. The roof was re-laid in Horsham stone during the 1930s with further work being carried out in the late 1970s. The chancel was re-roofed in 2019 aided by funding from Heritage Lottery Fund; on completion, a time capsule was

inserted into the roof space. A roof slab was also signed by staff and pupils of the Infant School and another by the project team and those who worked on the site.

Our ancient church requires regular on-going attention. A new tiled drain has formed around the building, and the guttering has been replaced. Urgent preservation work is currently progressing to restore the much-eroded stonework to the walls and buttresses due to the poor-quality workmanship of the late 1830s.

The **WEST PORCH and DOOR** date from the late 15th century (but with alterations) with the clunch stone surround possibly of earlier date. It is possible that this porch was originally erected over the south doorway, re-erected in its present position in 1902 and repaired in 2020. On the hanging side of the door (hidden if the door is open) is the remains of a holy water stoop where Christians would dip their fingers and cross their foreheads on entering and leaving the church. If you look carefully, medieval graffiti can be seen on the door frame. At some date, the door was rehung into its present position. The surround to the **WEST WINDOW** incorporates three interesting 15th century stone carvings of heads, but it is not known who they represent.

The **SOUTH DOORWAY** to the nave would have been the original main entrance to the church; its stone surround has been described as being “the best piece of Norman decoration in Surrey” but this has been widely disputed. The doorway has certainly undergone restoration during its long life.

The lower part of the **TOWER** follows a Norman design and, with the steeple, date from the rebuilding under the direction of Robert Ebbels following collapse of the tower in 1837. The steeple was subsequently restored and reshingled in the 1980s along with repairs to the stonework. The clock faces were repaired and regilded in 1991. The low outbuilding to the north side houses the central heating boiler.

Construction of the timber framed **WILSON ROOM** was, in large part, due to the generosity of parishioners Peter and Audrey Wilson. It was dedicated by the Bishop of Dorking in 2010.

The **MEMORIAL WALL** to the east of the church was built in 2017 and dedicated by the Bishop of Dorking to commemorate those whose ashes are buried in the garden of remembrance in front of the memorial.

POSTSCRIPT

In 1965, BBC Television decided to intersperse the traditional Whitehall ceremony on Remembrance Sunday with shots of a village ceremony. Ewhurst was chosen for this innovation. An unknown viewer in Rochester, Kent, noticed that our church had no processional cross and offered to pay for one of our own choosing and design. The simple modern brass cross (which is kept in the vestry when not in use) is the result of this generous impulse.

PLEASE REMEMBER TO SIGN OUR VISITORS' BOOK

We hope you have enjoyed the beauty of this ancient House of God. The maintenance of the church and its grounds is expensive and your support towards this continuing work would be much appreciated.

We warmly welcome visitors to all of our services.
Service times can be found on the noticeboards and on our website:

www.ewhurstchurch.org

You can also link to our **Ewhurst Church Facebook** page through the parish website.

The Parish Office can be found in the Wilson Room, the timber building next to the church.

The office is open on Mondays and Fridays between 10.00 am and 12:00 noon.

To contact us when the office is closed, telephone 01483 277584

or email **ewhurstchurch@gmail.com**
