

St Mary the Virgin, Barney. The Village of Barney was probably occupied before the Saxons came; the name spelt (Berlei in the Domesday Book of 1086) has an uncertain meaning. It may mean 'Barley Island' The church has work of several periods in its fabric.

The Exterior – Saxon Features. To the right of the southern porch notice a blocked round-headed doorway. This is probably Saxon work of 10th or early 11th century. There is a similar one at Great Melton near Norwich. Notice the jambs made of tiles which may be Roman in origin and salvaged from another building. Another piece of evidence in favour of a Saxon date is that the south wall of the nave is only about 2ft 8ins thick – Norman walls are generally over 3ft thick. The original SE quoin of the nave is still visible in the east wall of the south transept and is also made of tiles. It also contains a chunk of brown 'conglomerate' – the absence of dressed stone quoins is further evidence for the south wall being Saxon.

The Tower. Like the rest of the building, the tower is built of flint with stone dressings. It seems to have been erected in the early 16th century, towards the end of the Perpendicular period, from two bequests. In 1519 John Webster left 6/8d (worth about £350 – £400 in present day money) to the 'repacon' of the 'Stepill', and in 1522 'Moder Angnes' of Barney left 12d to the same. The bell is inscribed "*Edwin Tooke made me in 1676*".

The Windows. The west window in the tower is a Victorian addition. Now continue around the church in a clockwise direction. There is a blocked 13th century doorway on the north side – notice how narrow it is (only 2' 3" wide). The windows on the north side, like those throughout the nave, are of the 15th century.

The South Transept. This was probably added to the nave towards the end of the 15th century. In 1496 Richard Blower asked to be buried in this chapel, dedicated in honour of St John the Baptist, which he described as 'de nova edificate'.

The Porch. Inside the porch (which was probably late mediaeval) note the early 13th century doorway, which has a roll moulding. The door is also ancient; the lock has been completely restored.

The Interior – The Furniture of the Church. The church was repaired and restored in 1899, when the nave and its roof were repaired and the church was re-seated. There is 17th Jacobean panelling at the rear of the pews on the south side. The hatpegs on the south wall are probably 18th century.

The Font is one of the most interesting features inside the church. It is 15th century and has various emblems on the face of the bowl, as follows:

W Crossed keys and cross, emblem of St Peter

SW Symbol of the Holy Trinity

S Crowned M(aria) R(egina), emblem of Our Lady

SE Crowned 'ihs', motif of the Holy Name of Jesus

E Lamb with banner (the Agnuse Dei), St John the Baptist

NE Lion surrounded by eight birds – arms of Valoines, Lords of the Manor

N Cross saltire, emblem of St Andrew

NW Pelican vulning. It was believed that the pelican fed its young with its own blood, so it was used as a symbol of the Blessed Sacrament.

The Ledger Slabs in the floor near the font include a memorial to Robert Hastings (died 1682). His shield has the maunch, or sleeve, for the family of Baron Hastings of Gressenhall, and the star indicates that this was a third son, probably a young person, judging by its short length.

The Roof. Despite its repair in 1889, the roof is mainly the original 15th century arch-braced roof. There are angels where the purlins and principals intersect, and Tudor roses too. It has now weathered to a lovely silver-grey.

The Pulpit is Jacobean and dates from the 17th century. It carries two mediaeval brass inscriptions:-

1) 'Orate p. aia. Tho Lound nup. vicar huj.ecclie'. This Thomas Lound was Vicar from 1480 to 1508.

2) 'Orate p. aia Hen. Blower als Barker de Barney'. This one fits the slab near the front.

The Rood-stairs which lead to the loft over the screen are on the north side of the chancel arch. To the south side has a niche for a statue, occupied by a modern figure of the Virgin and Child.

The South Transept, now the chapel of Corpus Christi and St John, also has an arch-braced roof. There is a niche in the wall for the piscina, and the sill of the south window has been lowered to form seats.

Note the monuments to William Skinner Phillippo (1841), George & Margaret Phillippo (1842- 46), Ann Lloyd (1805) and MARY Reeve (1830).

The altar table is most probably 18th century. The chapel was restored as a memorial to the dead of two world wars.

The Chancel was repaired and redecorated in 1887. Its roof is modern and may date from then. From the back of the church it can be seen that this chancel 'weeps' slightly

to the north, a sign of early foundations, when setting out was less precise. The sedilia (seats for priests to use at Mass) are formed out of the windowsill on the south side.

The church has two bibles, the modern version of which is used for Common Worship. The original bible is inscribed "Presented by the Dowager Lady Astley AD 1848". This was during the time of the incumbent The Revd S F W Homfrey. Lord Hastings, whose family name is Astley, is the major land owner in the area.

The Piscina. Next to the sedilia is the 13th century angle piscina, a beautiful feature. Beside it is a small niche which may have been used as a credence shelf for the cruets of water and wine. Opposite, in the north wall, is an aumbry, a mediaeval cupboard for storing church plate. The 'Barney Cup' is extremely fine and has been on display in the Norwich Cathedral Treasury.

Over the last twenty years, we have carried out extensive restoration work such as: Re-leading the Tower roof; Restoration of the Chapel; Replacement of soffit boarding & re-tiling the Nave roof; Restoration of all windows, re-leading & re-glazing where necessary; The nave floor had been taken up, the foundation asphalted, & relaid with seasoned reclaimed pitch pine blocks; Re-felting, replacing timbers, & re-using the original tiles on the chapel roof. The heating has also been replaced.

The upkeep of this very lovely church requires funding. Our last very important project, which we have completed, was to rewire the lighting completely. We are now working towards the Restoration & Maintenance of the building fabric. If you wish, you can help us in our efforts by making a donation towards our continuing work & restoration of this ancient church. There is an offertory box in the wall to the left of the door.

We hope to see you at the church in the near future. The church is open 10.00am – 6.00pm in the summer months and 10.00am until dusk in the winter time.