

# CHURCH TRAIL



Above the vestry doorway (marked as a fire exit) is a memorial to John Theobold and his wife Clemence. They had a total of seven sons and nine daughters. Not all survived their infancy, but by the time Clemence died in 1605 she had 115 children, grandchildren and great grandchildren!

The memorial in the hinged frame beneath the window is an early example of recycling. It is a memorial to John Tebold, who died in 1577, but on the back is an earlier figure of an unknown lady (about 1500).

Just before you leave the Lady Chapel by the archway look to the right. You will see the remains of an old staircase, which used to lead up to a loft above the rood screen. You will also see a 12<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> Century sundial, scratched into the stone. This was probably brought in from outside to be re-used to block up the stairway. On the opposite wall is a "piscina", a bowl, built into the wall, for washing the vessels used in communion. There must once, therefore, have been an altar here before the Lady Chapel was built in the 15<sup>th</sup> Century.

## 6. The Windows

Seal's stained glass windows are all Victorian, except for some earlier fragments in the porch. Stained glass windows were originally placed in churches not only to look beautiful, but to remind congregations of stories central to Christian faith at a time when many could not read,

### The stories and themes in our windows are:

**Above the Font.** Christ's call to Peter to "feed my sheep", that is, to look after his followers.

**Back left.** The Transfiguration. Christ's disciples see him shining with glory as he talks with Moses and Elijah.

**North Aisle back.** Jesus walking on the water. The figure sinking into the waves is St Peter, who thought he would try to do the same!

**North Aisle middle.** Jesus healing St Peter's mother in law. This window was given as a thanksgiving for the recovery from illness of a former vicar's wife

**North Aisle front.** Jesus in the Temple as a small boy. He had slipped away from his family, and an understandably worried Mary and Joseph stand in the foreground, having just found him again.

**Above main Altar.** The Arrest, Crucifixion, Burial and Resurrection of Christ.

**Above Lady Chapel Altar.** The Ascension – Jesus goes back into heaven, watched by Mary and his disciples.

**Lady Chapel side window.** The Resurrection

**The South Aisle.** Jesus welcomes children, and calls his people to do the same!



I hope you have enjoyed discovering some of the treasures of this church. If the building was empty when you visited, however, then you will have missed some of the most important "treasures" – the people of God who still worship here day by day and week by week, and who seek to continue Seal's long tradition of witness and loving service of its community.

The Revd. Anne Le Bas

Welcome to our ancient and fascinating church. We hope that this leaflet will help you to enjoy your visit. Details of our services and activities can be found on the noticeboards or the church website. If there is anything you would like to talk about, please contact me, and I will be happy to try to help.

## PRIEST IN CHARGE

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## CHURCH WEBSITE

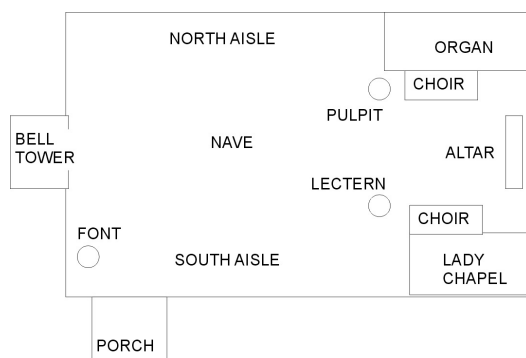
[www.sealpeterandpaul.com](http://www.sealpeterandpaul.com)

## HISTORY

There has been a church on this spot since at least the 12<sup>th</sup> Century. Seal is mentioned in the *Textus Roffensis* which dates from about 1120, but it is thought that there was a church here before that date. The oldest part of the current building – the nave and chancel - are 13<sup>th</sup> Century. The tower was added in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century, and the North Aisle in Victorian times. Each generation has treasured and used the church, adapting it for its own use. It isn't a museum, but a living centre of worship where many people have found peace, hope and guidance.

A large diagram on the wall near the bell tower door shows how the church has changed over the years, and an artist's reconstruction of the church as it would have been around 1825. There is a much fuller history of the church in a booklet which you can find on the table at the back of the church.

## A WALK AROUND THE CHURCH



### 1. The Font

The font, where baptisms take place, stands by the entrance to the church. The base may be 14<sup>th</sup> century, the counterweighted top is Jacobean (17<sup>th</sup> C.) Its place near the door is

traditional. Baptism (christening) is the way in which people first become part of the church. Above the font is a memorial to Maximillian Buck, a very long-serving vicar (1674-1720). The chandelier in the centre of the church was given in his memory.

### 2. The Bell Tower

The tower was built in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and now houses six bells, five from the 17<sup>th</sup> century and a sixth, the treble, added in 1886, to commemorate the marriage of Charles Mills to Alice Harboard. In the village you will find a pub called the Five Bells, standing opposite a cottage called the Six Bells – a reflection of the Victorian addition. Seal's bells have one of the longest "drops" in Kent, the ropes being 80ft long, which makes them a challenge to ring.

### 3. The Lectern and Pulpit

Walk up the central aisle of the church. On the right you will see the lectern (reading stand) in the shape of a fine carved angel, given as a memorial to members of the Mills family who fell in the First World War.

Beside the Lectern there is a sideboard with ornate carving. This was made from the old rood screen – the screen that separated the nave and the chancel. The screen was taken down during the Civil War by the Lord of the Manor, who stored in his own house for "safekeeping". After the Restoration of the Monarchy, however, he decided this was one thing that wasn't going to be restored, and had it made into various items of furniture for himself! His bailiff made the sideboard from the offcuts, and having been passed down through his family, it was eventually given back to the church in 1947.

The Pulpit, on the left, is Jacobean.

### 4. The Chancel and Sanctuary

Walk up between the choir stalls – we have an active choir of adults and children and always welcome new members!

On the floor to the left of the altar you will find our oldest named "inhabitant" – Sir William de Bryene - or, at least, a brass effigy of him. Sir William, described here as "knight, formerly Lord of Seal and Kemsing" died on Sept 23<sup>rd</sup> 1395. Whether he ever fought wearing the fine suit of armour and sword he is portrayed with here is doubtful, but old documents record his many legal battles, often with members of his own family!

### 5. The Lady Chapel

Go through the small gate from the chancel into the Lady Chapel (the "Lady" is Mary, who you can see with the infant Christ in the fine modern hanging by Pat Savage.)

This chapel contains memorials to the Pratt family, several of whom held high office in various Georgian Governments. The family owned Wildernesse House – now called Dorton House and run by the Royal London School for the Blind.

Eventually Wildernesse passed into the hands of Charles Mills who became the first Baron Hillingdon in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century – memorials to members of his family are on the opposite wall of the chapel.

The beautiful and touching bronze statue of the small child asleep between angel wings is dedicated to Elizabeth Mills, who died in 1908 at the age of six. I am told by a family member that she fell ill after eating strawberries washed in contaminated water. Her younger brother survived only because he was felt to be too young for strawberries.