

Primary/Secondary School Work relating to St Dunstan's, Cranbrook



INTRODUCTION

Any work relating to the church can be divided into three main aspects or areas. You may wish to look cursorily at all three areas or concentrate on small parts of one or two aspects, which can then be examined in greater depth.

First is the structure or the shell of the building with its doors, pillars, windows, roof and porch. Here you would be looking at architectural styles and the details that allow you to determine which period(s) of construction/style the building reflects. A preparatory lesson on the development of the arch from Norman/Romanesque to early English to Gothic/perpendicular would help the pupils make sense of the light and space in the building.

Second are the furnishings, such as the pews, altars, pulpit, lectern, font etc. All these would come in, if your focus in visiting the church were to be on religious studies, as the furnishings play a vital part in the liturgical life of the building.

Last but not least there are the memorials. The church is full of memorials to individuals in the town's history and these usually reflect what was happening in our national history as well. Some artefacts like the stained glass windows memorialise great moments or characters of English history or of the Christian story. This means that the teacher can make links to the Middle Ages, the Reformation, Religious Studies, etc.

RANGE OF WORK

The work recommended here is open to children from the age of ten upwards. Work that can be done with top primary and secondary children, in addition to the factual input, usually ends in doing some **drawing** as a record of what was seen and, we hope, learned. There should also be some **writing**, partly to record learning and reinforce it and to aid the memory in retaining it. These two basic methods of ensuring learning takes place will be our first port of call.

This guide tries to suggest some other ideas for work, either before or after a visit. But drawing on the spot or taking photographs so as to copy at leisure back in the classroom is very helpful to encourage pupils to draw accurately.

Dictionary work for the unusual vocabulary, and **use of encyclopaedias/history books** to look up some of the famous historical characters are to be recommended. There will also be

opportunities to do **map work** - investigating maps of Kent, Suffolk and of Africa. All work of course should be accompanied by **questioning** so as to ensure that the pupils are reflecting on what they are looking at and that teacher is deepening their understanding.

STRUCTURAL DETAILS

1. Doors: Look at all the doors in the church. The South Porch door is early medieval, while the west door dates from about 1400. The priest's door in the St Thomas Chapel is a fine example of 16th century work.

- *Pupils could draw these different doors and record and discuss the changes over time.*

2. Pillars, Arches, Clerestory and Tracery Windows: Look closely at all the arches, as they help to date a building like a church.

- *Pupils should draw the shape of the nave arches and the arches above the windows(including the tracery).*

These reveal a point or apex, which indicates they are in the late perpendicular style of the 16th century. In other words, late Middle Ages. *Look out for semi-circular tops to windows or doors* as these are earlier and might well be Norman or Anglo-Saxon. (NB: You will find, on the west wall near the tower, the outline of a semi-circular arch that seems to indicate a much earlier church.) The pillars are slender and deeply cut which also indicates late perpendicular and helps to create a sense of space. Windows are very wide and tall and therefore let in more light, which feature is also a sign of late medieval developments in church architecture.

- *Pupils could look up, in architectural dictionaries(there are Ladybird books on churches with all the architectural terms explained), terms such as Gothic, perpendicular, clerestory, Norman, and record them in writing.*

MEMORIALS

Stained glass windows (east window of chancel): This is a double memorial, as it was erected in 1906 as a memorial to Queen Victoria. It also memorialises the Anglo Saxons and the Coming of Christianity. Look at the characters and/or the stories in the main east end, chancel window. It has panels depicting the Anglo Saxon King Ethelbert and his Queen Bertha of Kent, who were responsible for the conversion of this part of England

to Christianity. There are also saints Dunstan and Edmund the Martyr. The story of Edmund, King of East Anglia, is most gory and stirring, and consequently will be lapped up by children. He gives his name to the town of Bury St Edmunds in Suffolk.

- *Pupils could look these historical figures up in encyclopaedias or online, find their dates and interesting facts about them and then write a brief account of their stories.*
- *Work on Anglo-Saxon England would require some map work on East Anglia. Look up Bury St Edmunds, for example.*
- *They could also draw the panel of one of the figures and write his/her story alongside. St Dunstan was Archbishop of Canterbury as well as being one of the great figures of church history. (See the notes at beginning.)*

The Neve window (next to the Roberts' family tree) shows St Mark's account of the Resurrection in a beautifully pictorial style with a landscape in the background. Other windows are more Gothic and spiky in style.

- *The pupils might like to attempt to draw the outline of a stained glass window indicating its separate sections, arches and tracery, before trying to fill in the panels with the characters or scene from the NT.*

3. Baker Memorial: Of interest to teachers teaching the Reformation/ Tudor period. They should tell the story of Baker who imprisoned Protestants in the room (called the parvise) above the south porch during the Catholic Queen Mary Tudor's reign prior to them being taken out to be burned at the stake.

- *Pupils could draw the memorial (which is easily done) and the south porch indicating the parvise above and write a little about Baker and what he did.*

4. Marble Reliefs: (A) At the west end of the church there are two reliefs. On the wall behind the font is a beautiful relief to Thomas Webster, Royal Academician (R.A.) and popular painter, who lived in Cranbrook and was the founder of the Cranbrook Colony of artists. Cranbrook Museum holds many copies of his paintings. The memorial is sculpted by Hamo Thorneycroft whose father was responsible for the statue of Boadicea and her daughters on Westminster Bridge, overlooking Parliament. Note how finely sculpted the feathers are on the angels' wings. Webster is holding the tools of his trade -

brushes and a palette.

- *Pupils could attempt to draw the memorial or a part of it (such as a little angel) and look up some of Webster's paintings, as he often painted scenes involving Cranbrook children.*

A visit to Cranbrook Museum would be useful to acquire copies of Webster's paintings. **(B)** The second relief is of the two Alexander brothers who were explorers in Africa where both died.

- *Look up a map of Europe and Africa to find Lake Chad and discuss how the men got to Chad, which is landlocked and a long way inland. The pupils could draw an outline map of Africa and indicate Chad and the names of the two men, Claud and Boyd Alexander.*

6. Roberts' Memorial: This is represented by a family tree.

This gentry family had an estate just outside the town, which centred on Glassenbury Park. Their ancestry goes back to the Middle Ages.

- *Pupils could make their own family tree. They will need to look closely at the Roberts' one, draw the outline and then add their own siblings, parents, grandparents, etc.*

7. Eddye Memorial: This memorial is to the two sons of an Elizabethan vicar (1592-1616), William Eddye, who emigrated to New England in North America, whose descendants have maintained the link and bequeathed the memorial in 1902.

- *Teacher may do some prior work on early American colonies, the Mayflower and The Pilgrim Fathers.*

8. Brasses/ Indents: (A) In the St Thomas Chapel, dedicated to St Thomas a Becket, under the pews on the north side of the aisle lies the indent (the ghost-like mark of a lost brass) of a medieval (14th century) priest, which is believed to be the memorial of the very first vicar, William of Meopham.

- *Pupils could draw this indent and label it, (as it is very simple) and find Meopham on a map of Kent.*

- *Teacher could read/ tell the story of St Thomas a Becket and the pupils write a summary of it.*

(B) The Sheafe brass is on north side of the Thomas Chapel

altar, just below the steps to the chancel. Thomas Sheafe, a clothier in the town, died two hundred years after the first vicar in 1520. His brass effigy shows how prosperous he was, as he is dressed in an ermine-lined cloak, with his initials and a 'chrysom child' in swaddling clothes.

- *Pupils could do some dictionary work, to elucidate the words 'chrysom' and 'effigy'.*
- *These memorials should be compared with later ones, in that these are simpler, smaller and less grand than later ones when presumably families had more money to spend on commemorating a forebear. Teacher might wish to discuss why people wished to commemorate their forebears and consider what is done today.*

(C) Just up the steps into the chancel and underneath a pew is the Roberts memorial brass. This is a very rare one with a brass border.

FURNISHINGS

9. Pews: There are three different kinds of pews in the church, the choir stalls, the nave pews and the ones in the St Thomas Chapel. These scissor pews were designed by the architect of Lancing College and Chapel in Sussex, Richard Cromwell Carpenter who was also a friend of Pugin, the greatest of the 19th century Gothic architects.

- *Pupils could draw the side end of these scissor pews (as they are called).*
- *They could also draw the much simpler aisle end of the nave pews as well as attempt to draw the aisle end of the choir stalls, recreating possibly the panelling but especially the finials.*
- *Compare and attempt to explain why the pews are so different and why the choir stalls are so much more ornate. Note There will be prizes for accurate drawings. Please send only the very best drawings of the pew-ends to the Trustees of The Friends of St Dunstan's. (No more than half a dozen examples from any one school.)*

10. Organ: This was installed in 1854 during Queen Victoria's reign and has parts of the original organ for the Crystal Palace which itself was built for the Great Exhibition of 1851.

- *Pupils could find out about the Crystal Palace and the Great Exhibition, where it took place, what it exhibited and why.*

ODDITIES

11. Green Men: The Green Man is an ancient, pagan image of the forces of nature. There are four roof bosses on the wall on either side of the west door and one roof boss in the vaulted ceiling of the south porch, all of which represent the Green Man. Each one is carved in wood. As it is associated with pagan imagery, it is surprising that it has been incorporated into the church. Perhaps early Christians were hedging their bets.

- *Pupils could copy one of the Green Man bosses and then look up an encyclopaedia for more information.*

12. Outside the Church: Look up to the top of the Tower, where there is the clock and a figure of Old Father Time. The wooden original is to be found in the Museum, this one being a replica in acrylic. Both hands are full. Teacher needs to elicit just what he holds in each hand and what the significance of these objects is. In one he has a scythe, in the other an hour-glass or egg-timer. What is, therefore, Old Father Time's own significance?

- Questioning: Why does he carry such objects? What was a scythe used for normally? On what is Old Father Time going to use his scythe? Why should he be carrying an hour-glass? NB This is a very good opportunity to introduce the idea of imagery and symbolism, as Time cutting down humans in the same way the farmer/peasant scythes the corn is clearly a metaphor for death. His scythe and hour-glass, also in association, become symbols of our mortality, as eventually the sand in the hour-glass runs out. Why is a figure that reminds us that we are going to die appropriate for a Christian church?*