

ST. MARY'S CHURCH - WILLISHAM (GRADE II)

The church in its rural environment

As the village of Willisham is approached from the south, St. Mary's church can be seen in a very commanding position at the top of Strawberry Hill, overlooking the surrounding area. The view from the South Door is one of the main features of the church.

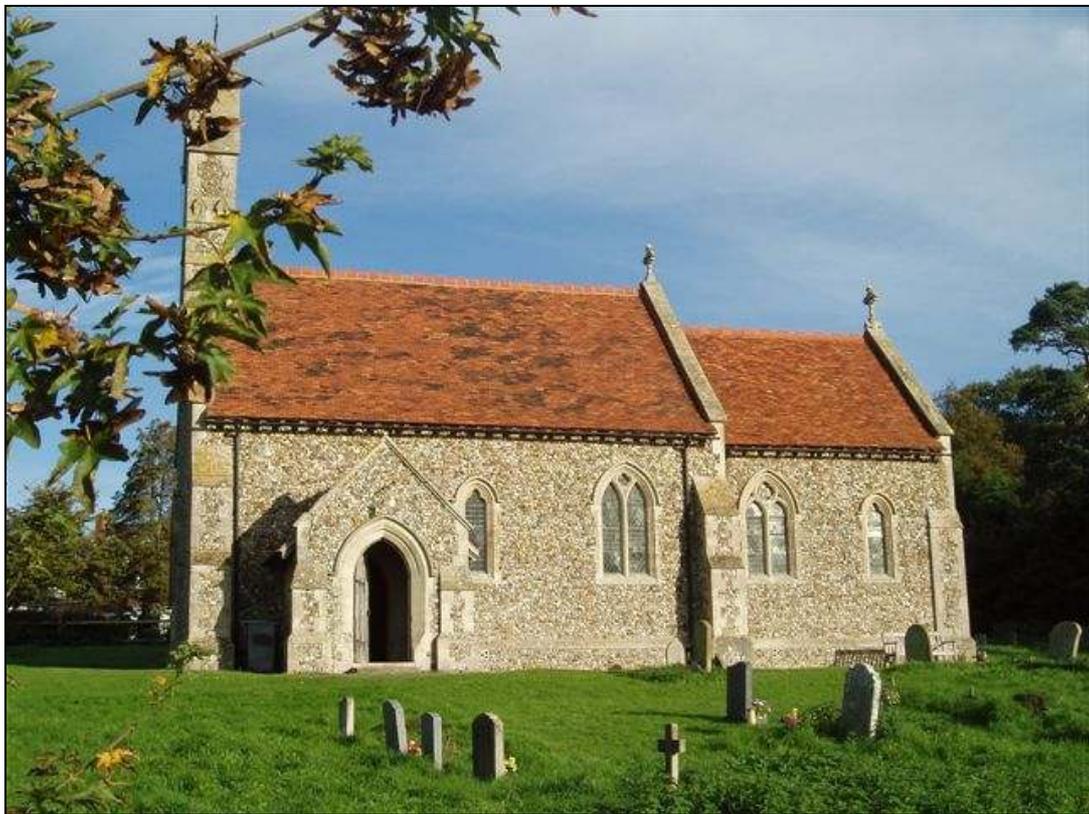


View from south door

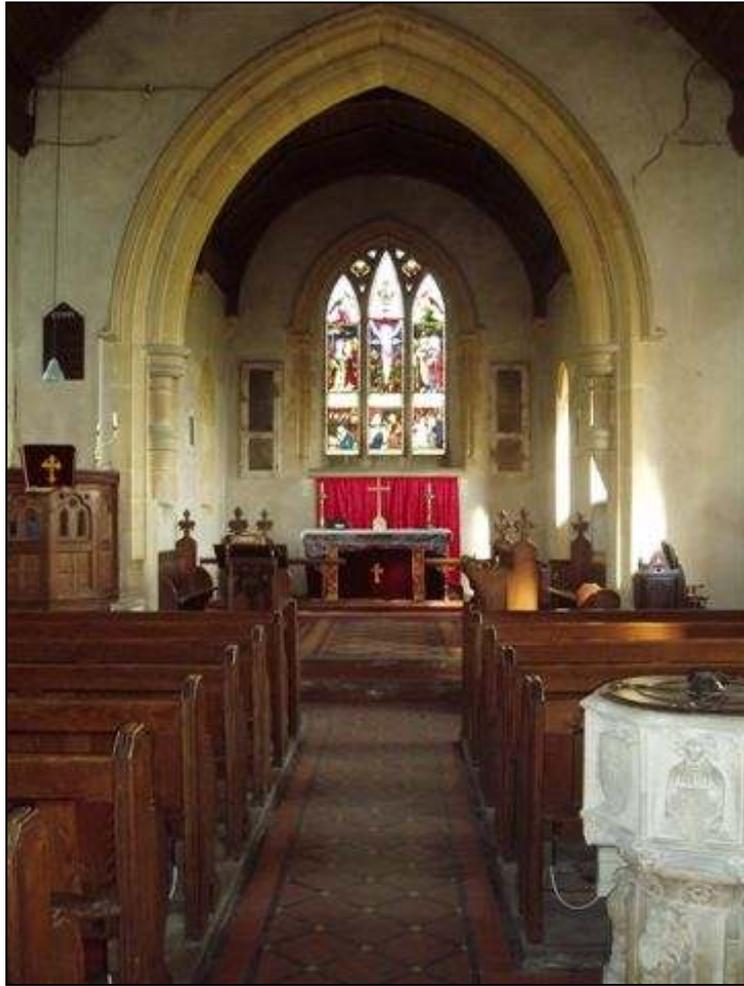
The present church was built in 1878 (on the site of a much earlier building) at an approximate cost of £1,300, and was designed by Herbert Green. However, the Domesday Book records a church in Willisham and it is possible, therefore, that Christian worship has taken place on the same site for a thousand years.

The present church is built in the late 13th century style, reusing rubble from the earlier church in the external walls and faced with fieldstones and flints. The window design is geometric tracery. The church has a single bell which was restored and refitted in 2001.

The church seats approximately 100. The pews in the nave have simple ends, but the choir stalls have carved poppy head ends. The chancel floor has fine encaustic tiles, with clay tiles in the nave. All that remains of the old church is the beautiful octagonal font, variously described as 12th, 13th or 15th century.



The church seen from the south



The interior of the church



East window

Willisham is a small rural community, with a population of 268. The church is situated approximately a quarter of a mile from the main cluster of houses, and the final approach does not have the benefit of a footpath on either side of the road. There are approximately 12 council houses in the village, and the remaining properties are not within the financial reach of those embarking on a first-time mortgage. There are, therefore, very few young families in the village. A large percentage of the village population is retired.

The shared village hall is sited in the neighbouring village of Offton. This hall is in poor condition and in need of renovation or replacement.

18th May 2007

Frances Gilson (Churchwarden)