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## History of the Parish Church



### The Parish Church of St Mary and All Saints

"...the most beautiful country church in all England" - William Morris.

#### The Architecture

The architecture indicates that the church was built mainly between 1260 and 1290, although probably not completed until about 1320. Its style is "Transitional" - from Early English to Decorated - and the plan of the church is cruciform; unusual in so small a village church. The living at that period was in the gift of the Crown and all the visible evidence suggests that Dunsfold Church was built by royal masons. It could well be "a complete example of what the generation after Westminster Abbey thought suitable for a small and fairly remote village church" (Pevsner, Buildings of England).

#### The Site

The church is situated about half a mile from Dunsfold village on land just above the flood level of a tributary of the River Arun. The area was probably sacred in pre-Christian times and the mound on which the church stands is thought to be artificial - perhaps a burial mound with its own shrine. A holy well with a reputation for miraculous cures for eye diseases lies below the church by the stream.

#### Patronage

Dunsfold is not mentioned in the Domesday Survey of 1086. The first reference to the church occurs in the Taxatio Ecclesiastica of 1291 and the first rector was presented in 1294. The original patrons were the rectors of Shalford, which was a crown living. In 1305 the right of presentation of "Shalford with Duntlesfeld" was granted by Edward I to the Hospital of St Mary at Spital without Bishopsgate, a priory of Augustinian canons. With the dissolution of the monasteries under Henry VIII (circa 1536) the advowson reverted to the Crown and it remains today in the gift of the Lord Chancellor.

A list of Rectors of Dunsfold is to be found at the west end of the north wall. It was first compiled and painted in 1893.

#### The Exterior

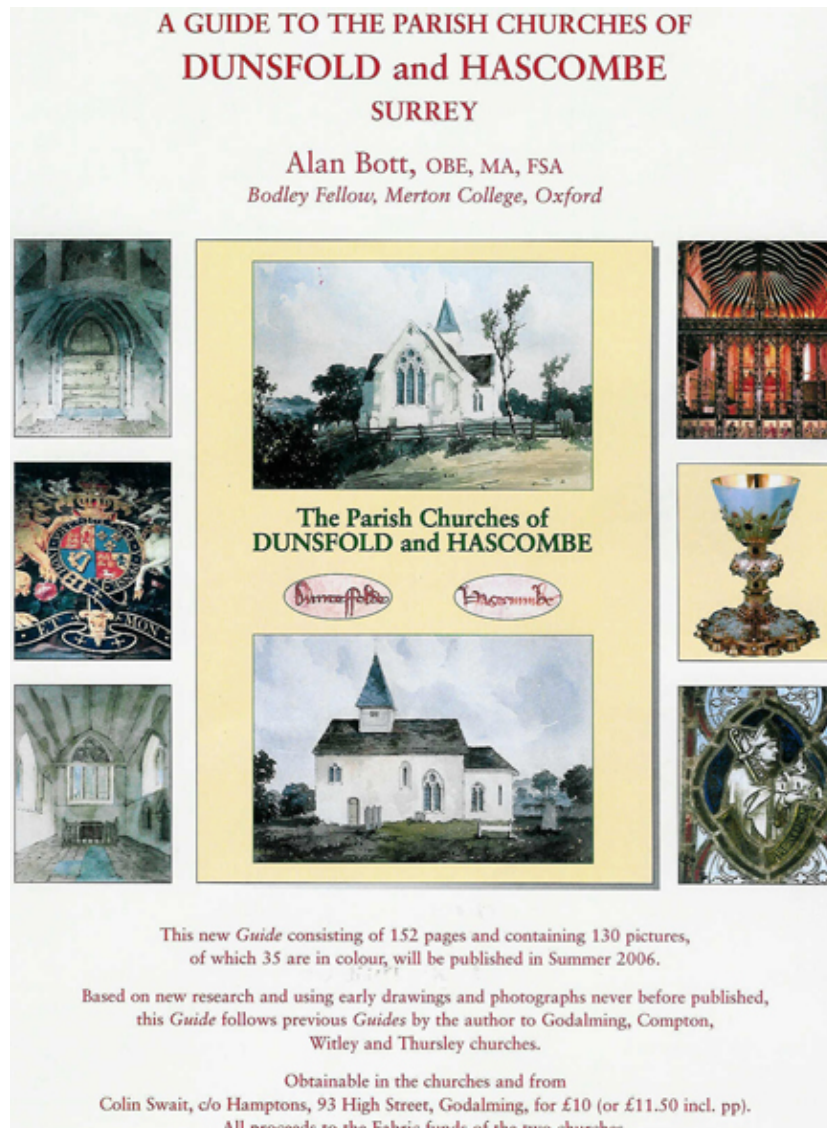
The outer walls are made of the local Bargate stone. The walls were galleted (ironstone chips inserted in the mortar) in the 1880s. The lower part of the roof is covered with Horsham slabs which once covered the entire roof. The original fifteenth century tower together with the west window and wall were taken down and reconstructed in 1892. The massive oak door is fourteenth century. The lychgate was erected in 1901 as a memorial to Queen Victoria.

#### Furnishings

Dunsfold Church is well known for its thirteenth century oak pews, amongst the oldest in the country, but the original seats have been widened and the backs filled in.. The ends of the pews have delicate carvings with small holes for holding tapers.

The 12 ½ inch key to the main door is one of the church's treasures and is kept by the Rector. Centuries of use have turned the wards almost to right angles to the stem.

The Dunsfold Millennium Canvas Embroidery measuring 17'3" by 4' hangs on the west wall (for more information on the embroidery see the [Potpourri Section](#) of this website).



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