



View of the west porch across the River

THE CHURCHES CONSERVATION TRUST

89 Fleet Street · London EC4Y 1DH

Registered Charity No. 258612

PRICE: £1.00



ST EDWOLD'S
CHURCH

STOCKWOOD, DORSET





THE CHURCHES CONSERVATION
TRUST WELCOMES YOU TO
ST EDWOLD'S CHURCH,
STOCKWOOD, DORSET

Many years ago Christians built and set apart this place for prayer. They made their church beautiful with their skill and craftsmanship. Here they have met for worship, for children to be baptised, for couples to be married and for the dead to be brought for burial. If you have time, enjoy the history, the peace and the holiness here. Please use the prayer card and, if you like it, you are welcome to take a folded copy with you.

Although services are no longer regularly held here, this church remains consecrated; inspiring, teaching and ministering through its beauty and atmosphere. It is one of 300 churches throughout England cared for by The Churches Conservation Trust. The Trust was created in 1969 and was, until 1994, known as the Redundant Churches Fund. Its object is to ensure that all these churches are kept in repair and cared for, in the interests of the Church and Nation, for present and future generations.

Please help us to care for this church. There is a box for donations or, if you prefer to send a gift, it will be gratefully received at the Trust's headquarters at 89 Fleet Street, London EC4Y 1DH (Registered Charity No. 258612).

We hope that you will enjoy your visit and be encouraged to see our other churches. Some are in towns; some in remote country districts. Some are easy and others hard to find but all are worth the effort.

Nearby are the Trust churches of:

NETHER CERNE, ALL SAINTS.

5 miles north of Dorchester on A352.

OBORNE, ST CUTHBERT OLD CHURCH

1 mile east of Sherborne on A30.

ST EDWOLD'S CHURCH

STOCKWOOD, DORSET

by KENNETH SMITH

THIS TINY CHURCH is unique in its dedication. Edwold was the younger brother of St Edmund, the Anglian King who was murdered by the Danes in 870 at the age of 30. Edwold, it is said, was offered the crown; he refused, 'hating the world because hard fortune took him and his brother', and left East Anglia. He found his way to the hills of Dorset and settled at Cerne, near a spring called The Silver Well – probably the same well that later was called Saint Augustine's in honour of a legendary and improbable visit from that saint two centuries earlier. Stockwood's earlier name was, indeed, Stoke St Edwold and this would suggest that the saintly Edwold had a cell here as well as at Cerne. He was regarded as 'an heremite of high perfection', but sadly he lived only a single year in Dorset and was buried at Cerne. Such was the regard in which he was held that the first major monastic rebuilding of Cerne in 987 provided for his reburial in the choir of the new Abbey.

The small parish has passed through the hands of many great Dorset families, including the Howards of Bindon. In Queen Elizabeth's time the then Lord Howard became indebted to the Crown and Stockwood was placed in the trusteeship of a distinguished quartet, which included Lord Burghley, the Lord High Treasurer, and the Earl of Sussex, the Lord Chamberlain of the Household. Now it forms part of the nearby Ilchester estates. Though a separate living, with its own parish priest, for many centuries, Stockwood was finally annexed in 1888 to the rectories of

ST EDWOLD'S CHURCH

Melbury Sampford and Melbury Osmond. After many years of disuse, St Edwold's Church passed into the care of The Churches Conservation Trust in 1972.

Measuring 30ft by 12ft, St Edwold's is one of the smallest churches in England. Though its dedication indicates a pre-Norman foundation, the present building dates from the early 15th century. The east window, trefoiled and of three lights, is of this date, as is the west doorway with segmental pointed head and chamfered jambs. In 1636 the western porch was added and the charming little bell-turret of four short columns supporting a stone dome, topped with ball terminal and pinnacles. The turret was repaired in 1988. The small bell, rehung with new fittings and framework in 1988, is a 19th-century brass-foundry casting. It was purchased in 1877 at a cost of £1 15s. (£1.75p).



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In 1870 (Hutchins' *History of Dorset*, 3rd Ed.) the church was described as 'neatly pewed' by Mrs Susannah Strangways Horner – a benefactress from the great Melbury House nearby: those pews must have been of the early 18th century. Sadly, an unrecorded 'restoration' after that date swept away all the interior fittings and probably also accounts for the disappearance of the mediaeval piscina, now incongruously re-set on the outside of the south wall of the chancel. The font and altar-rails and remaining pews date from this late Victorian period.

The 17th-century Holy Table (with modern marble top) has an enriched rail inscribed: 'The Giueft of A.M. Wedo D.S. E.H. 1637'. It comes from Whitcombe, near Dorchester, another church in the care of The Churches Conservation Trust.

The small brick footbridge connecting the churchyard with the adjoining field marks the original access to St Edwold's. It was carefully restored in 1975, with help from the Dorset County Council.

*Photographs by Christopher Dalton and
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