

HISTORY OF THE CHURCH

- c. 1066 Although Withyham (which implies a Saxon settlement, ham meaning home) was not mentioned in Domesday Book, it was certainly placed under the patronage of St. Michael soon after the Norman Conquest.
- 1291 The first mention of a church at Withyham. A grant was made by Edward I to Pope Nicholas IV of a tenth of all benefices to help pay for a Crusade. Withyham was valued at 45 marks (about £30).
- 1324 At the outbreak of war with France, King Edward II took possession of property held in England by foreign religious houses. At that time Withyham was attached to the Benedictine Priory at Morteyn in Normandy. It is doubtful whether the Prior ever regained his rights.
- by 1372 The church was a cell of the Benedictine Abbey of St. Martin of Tours. By charter of King Edward III the right of preferment (or advowson) was given to his son John of Gaunt.
- by 1400 The church had been almost completely rebuilt. It consisted of a nave, north and south aisles, chancel and west tower. At the end of the north aisle was the chapel of the Sackville family. There are records of burials in the chapel since 1451.
- 1413 The conferment of the advowson on the Prior and Convent of the Holy Trinity at Hastings was confirmed by Henry V. From this time Withyham seems to have been a Rectory.
- by 1600 The patronage of the church was given to Lord Buckhurst during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I. It has continued in the possession of his family ever since.
- 1663 On 16th June the church was struck by lightning and almost completely destroyed.
- 1672 The rebuilding of the church was completed. Of the old church only the lower part of the tower, the west wall from the belfry door to the N.W. corner, the north and south east walls remained to be incorporated in the new building. The rectory was built about this time.
- 1674 The five bells melted in the fire of 1663 were re-cast.
- by 1680 The Sackville Chapel had been rebuilt and the memorial by Cibber to Thomas Sackville installed.
- 1715 The sixth bell (treble) was added.
- 1841-64 The church was extensively restored. The gallery across the western end was removed; the south aisle built; the low ceiling removed and the chancel arch carried up in solid masonry. Carolean pews, pulpit and panelling were removed. The ornate 17th century south porch was replaced.
- 1878 Oak seats in the south and centre aisles were installed and the screen between the tower and nave erected.
- 1883 The north aisle was re-seated.
- 1908 The bells were re-cast and two added by John Taylor & Co.
- 1920 Fourteenth century altar piece installed in the Lady Chapel.
- 1954 Rector's stall given in memory of the late Rector, the Reverend Arthur Miles.
- since 1954 Many improvements have been made including the installation of oil-fired central heating and the replacement of the vestry floor. The bells have been rehung and the organ overhauled. The churchyard has been extended by land given by Lord De La Warr.