

# Benefactors: Katherine Welles and Her Two Husbands



**The parish church was an important institution in medieval and early Tudor society. Many people left bequests for the work, upkeep and development of the church.**

In 1512, a wealthy widow called Katherine Welles died and left several bequests to St Mildred's Church. She had remarried but wished to be buried next to her first husband, James Aylonde in the churchyard at St Mildred's. She had at least one daughter and a granddaughter called Christine. The first of her bequests to St Mildred's Church was

**'my gold ryng which is a rownde hope and of the whiche ryng I will there be made IIII knoppes for the canape of lawne.'**

(my gold ring that is a round hoop shall be made into four knobs for the fine linen canopy).

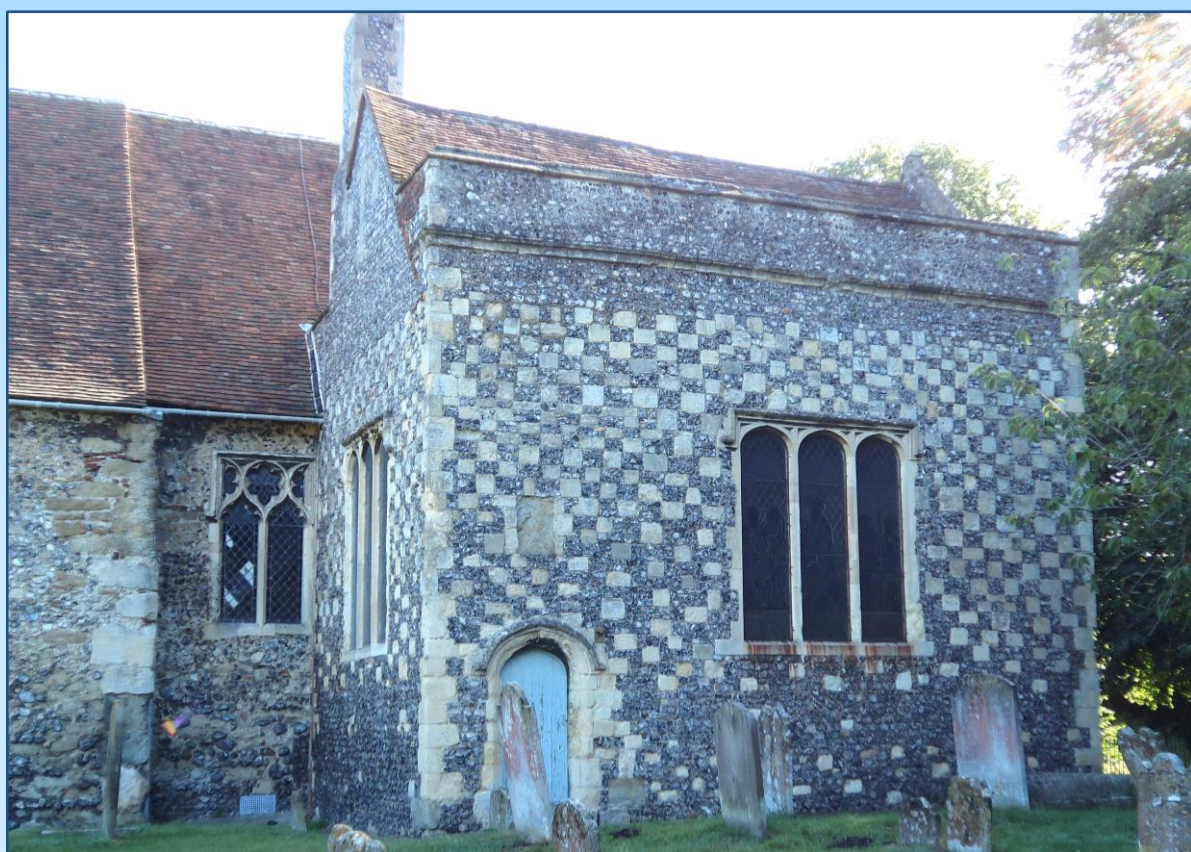


**Her main bequest was £6 13s 4d (about £2,430 today) from the sale of part of her property after her death to hire a carpenter to create as many pews as possible. On each of the pews she wanted him to carve 'three Welles' and Richard Welles' name. Sadly, the pews do not survive.**

James Aylonde, her first husband, in 1485, made numerous bequests including £2 (about £1,360 today) towards work on the new vestry and repairing the nave. He gave a church service book and two surplices, as well as gifts to several lights. In 1496, Richard Welles, her second husband, wished to be buried before the 'quire' (choir) door at St Mildred's church. This was a prestigious location so he gave £10 (about £6,660 today) towards his burial place and the 'new work' being undertaken in the church at the time.

**Credits:** Research and text by Beth Brown. Photograph of the graveyard at St Mildred's where Katherine and her first husband are buried, Rev. Jo Richards. Photograph of a wood carrier carved on a medieval pew end from Earl Soham, Imogen Corrigan, M. Phil. Photograph of a post-medieval gold ring inscribed 'I live in hope', courtesy of The British Museum.

# Benefactors: The Atwood or Wood Family



**Throughout the medieval period, one of the main benefactors of Saint Mildred's Church was the Atwood or Wood family.**

**They paid for the Atwood chantry and made gifts towards reparations which occurred throughout the church. It is highly probable that these bequests came from the same family as names often varied in this way.**

## **What was a medieval Chantry?**

A chantry was an endowment made by someone, usually a churchman or a wealthy lay person, to pay for a priest to conduct a series of masses and works of charity at a designated altar for the benefit of the donor's soul and the soul of his (or her) family and friends, to shorten the length of time that the individual's soul spent in purgatory. The chantry itself could be established temporarily or in perpetuity, either at an altar within the church or with the creation of a chapel for the family.

**Thomas Wood** died in 1498 and was buried in St Mildred's Church next to the choir of Saint John the Baptist, near his parents. As well as gifts to several lights and £3 6s 8d (about £2,220 today) for church repairs, he established a temporary chantry in the north chancel, desiring an honest priest to celebrate mass at the altar of Saint John for his and his parents' souls. Today, the bench ends in the choir of Saint Mildred's contain the image of an eagle, representing Saint John the Evangelist, possibly from a 'lost' medieval church nearby.

## **The Atwood Chantry**

The Atwood chantry was founded by Thomas Atwood in c.1512 on the south side of the church. According to William Somner, writing in the seventeenth century, there was a remembrance in Latin to the family in the stained glass, which sought prayers for the souls of Thomas Wood and his wife, Margaret. Thomas Atwood's chantry chapel was dedicated to Jesus.



**Credits:** Research and text by Beth Brown. Photograph of the exterior of the Atwood Chapel, St Mildred's Church by Dr Sheila Sweetinburgh. Photograph of the interior of the Atwood Chantry Chapel, by Rev. Jo Richards.