

Historic buildings in Saxmundham

Many of the buildings and shops in the High Street and Market Place date from the Georgian and Victorian period, and some are earlier, but most are 'disguised' by more recent alterations or shopfronts. The following sections provide a summary of the most interesting or significant.

Click here for a link to East Suffolk Council website where there is some fascinating information:

[Saxmundham-Conservation-Area-Appraisal-March-2016.pdf](#)

Bell Hotel

The present Bell Hotel was built in 1842 on a site which had been occupied by an inn for centuries. The inn originally had stabling for 40 horses, six acres of pasture and chaise house.

King George II stopped at the Bell in January 1737. Having landed at Lowestoft at noon he arrived at The Bell at 7.00 in the evening where the party halted to change horses. It took another four hours to reach Ipswich!

The Bell came under new management in 2002 and underwent large-scale renovations to the public bar, lounge, restaurant and guest rooms.



Bell Hotel

Having been closed for a few months, we are pleased that [The Bell at Sax](#)! (tel: 602331) was re-opened on 29th November 2013. Jonny is working hard to provide good food seven days a week. Why not call in to try it?

Market Hall

The Market Hall is one of the most distinctive buildings in Saxmundham with its neo-classical facade strangely sandwiched between the Bell Hotel and the adjoining shops on the west side of the High Street.

The hall was built as a Corn Exchange in 1846 and given to the town by the Long family who have their coat of arms above the door. The hall was renovated in the 1930s to commemorate the coronation of King George VI.



Market Hall

Market Place and Town pump

Saxmundham's first market charter was granted in 1272 by King Edward I to John De Ramsey, Lord of the Manor. There has been a market in the town ever since, probably in the same location as it is held today.



The oldest building in the Market Place is the former 16th century **Angel Inn**. Prior to conversion a small cobbled yard, with pump horse trough and stables backed onto the old A12 road. During conversion many interesting features were exposed and retained, such as the mullioned window under the eaves.

At the southern end of the Market Place is the '**Old' Bank House**, **Site of former Angel Inn** Saxmundham's first bank built in the early 19th century by Gurneys the Norfolk quaker family.

The town pump has recently been restored and placed near to the entrance of the Market Place car park. It was cast by Garrett's of Leiston and given to the town by William Long in 1838.

Railway Station

The main station building remains the focal point of a complex of fine Victorian railway, commercial and residential buildings that served this busy junction and its employees of the East Suffolk Railway. The station used to be home to a café, travel office and a number of other small businesses, however, the building is currently empty.



Saxmundham Station in 2003

Saxmundham Station opened in 1859 serving Ipswich to Lowestoft and Yarmouth with a branch line to Aldeburgh opened in 1860. Photographs of about 1900 show a footbridge, large water tank, and 'staggered' platforms. Saxmundham was an important junction for both recreational and commercial traffic serving the resorts of Thorpeness and Aldeburgh, as well as the industrial town of Leiston. From the 1860s until after WWII, Saxmundham would have handled the majority of Garrett's output, on its way to some corner of the world. The station is unstaffed now and the signal box controls the whole line from Westerfield to Oulton Broad by radio.

Historic shops

Kerseys shop at 23 High Street has been a clockmakers and jewellers since 1769 when the business was founded. During the mid-19th century it was owned by J Woolterton who, as well as being a clock maker and repairer, was the town's beadle, a kind of forerunner to the local bobby: the beadle stick still exists and is in the shop today and there are believed to be several lockups under the shop.

David Kersey, the previous owner of the shop and keen marathon runner and charity fundraiser, is the third in a line of Kerseys going back to the 1930s. A clock by Jerome D Bright, thought to have been made in around 1790, still stands in the shop. The shop has now been renamed and taken over by Jackey L **clock** and is primarily a Jewellers.



David Kersey with JD Bright's clock

Crisps booksellers, printers and stationers shop at 25/27 High Street was established in 1834, and although still known as Crisps has a new owner called Gareth White.

Wells started as an Ironmonger in about 1830 at 46 High Street but has been sold and after extensive refurbishment by the owners of The Store is now open and definitely worth a visit.

Just beyond Wells, on the site of the Coach and Horses Inn, is the former GPO and **Telephone Exchange** completed in 1954 by T F Winterburn, now used solely as a sorting office and by other businesses.

In the early part of the 19th century, the jeweller and clockmaker Jerome Bright occupied **Ashford House** and it is here that his son Henry Bright, the painter, is said to have been born in 1810. In about 1840, two of Jerome Bright's daughters married Isaac and James Ashford who took over the premises and set up their antiques and furniture making business. The remainder of the Bright family moved to Park Lodge in South Entrance. The Ashford family traded there until the 1980s. Flick & Son estate agents and auctioneers moved to Ashford House in 1983 having been established in the town for 150 years prior to this.

Private houses of interest

Situated in South Entrance, **Monks Cottages** are undoubtedly some of the oldest dwellings in Saxmundham and visited by the BBC House Detectives. The outside has panelled pargetting in a checker pattern, a reproduction probably of the original 17th century pargetting. The interiors retain many of the original Tudor features including stud work, plaster and horse hair reinforced walls, inglenook fireplaces, ornate carved oak beams and large oak floor boards.



**Monks Cottages in
South Entrance**

Holly Lodge or the 'White House' in the High Street was built by John Thurlow, builder and stonemason and father of the sculptor Thomas Thurlow. **Chantry House** at the traffic lights was built in 1850 on the site of a much older house. The Chantry is reputed to have been connected with the Wingfield and De Pole families. Further elegant Victorian houses are to be found in Fairfield Road and St John's Road.

About a mile south-east of the town is **Hurts Hall**, the seat of the Long family until the 1950s. It was originally built about 1650 and bought by the Lt Col Charles Long, (1679-1723) in the early part of the 18th century. The Charles Long (1760-1838) who became Lord Farnborough was MP successively for Rye, Midhurst and Haslemere and the monument for him is in Saxmundham Church, although he did not live in Saxmundham. The Hall was replaced in 1803 and again in 1893 after a disastrous fire in 1890. According to Nikolaus Pevsner's 'The Buildings of England: Suffolk' it had the "largest dovecote in Suffolk, brick, octagonal, with a high-pitched roof and a glazed lantern." The entrance and driveway to the hall are in South Entrance, near the main crossroads, while the hall itself can be seen across 'the layers' as you enter the town from the south. The contents of Hurts Hall were sold in 1958, the portraits of all those Longs who had actually owned it were given to the Christchurch Mansion gallery in Ipswich where they can be seen and the records of the estates in Suffolk and Jamaica were given to the Suffolk County Record Office.