



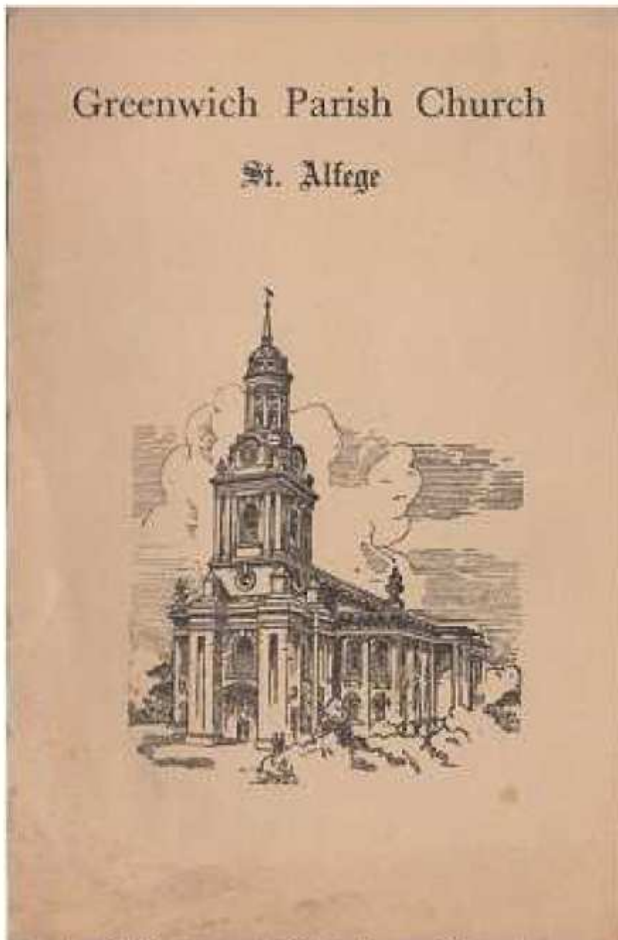
Royal Borough of Greenwich

St Alfege Church



- 1 Royal Observatory Greenwich and Peter Harrison Planetarium
- 2 National Maritime Museum
- 3 The Queen's House
- 4 Stephen Lawrence Gallery and University of Greenwich
- 5 Chapel and University of Greenwich
- 6 Painted Hall and University of Greenwich
- 7 Trinity Laban Music
- 8 Dreadnought Library University of Greenwich
- 9 Tourist Information Centre and Discover Greenwich Visitor Centre
- 10 Cutty Sark
- 11 The Fan Museum
- 12 Wernher Collection at Ranger's House
- 13 Church of Our Lady Star of the Sea
- 14 Greenwich Market and Shops
- 15 St. Alfege Church
- 16 Trafalgar Tavern
- 17 Devonport House Conference Centre
- 18 Post Office and Bureau de Change
- 19 Police Station
- 20 Clock Tower Market

T



A short history of St Alfege Church and its environs, published June 1951 to mark the launch of the restoration appeal (.pdf 1837kb)

A sacred site for the past 1,000 years

11th century

Christianity in Greenwich goes back to 968, and a church has stood since 1012 on the traditional site of the martyrdom of St Alfege. In his sixth year as Archbishop of Canterbury, **Alfege** was taken hostage by Viking raiders and murdered on 19 April.

13th century

A new church was built around 1290. Cardinal Morton was vicar 1444-1454; King Henry VIII was baptised here in 1491; and Thomas Tallis - the "Father of English Church Music" - was buried here in 1585. But the building, undermined by burials, collapsed in a great storm in 1710.

18th century

This church, the third on this site, was designed by Nicholas Hawksmoor, who trained under Sir Christopher Wren, working with him on the

Opening times

Volunteers keep the Church open for visitors, so although we try our best to keep to the opening times listed below, there may be some instances when this isn't possible. You can [call the Church Office](#) in advance if you want to check if the Church is open.

Monday 11am to 4.00pm
Tuesday 11am to 4.00pm
Wednesday 11am to 4.00pm
Thursday 11am to 2.00pm
Friday 11am to 4.00pm
Saturday 10am to 4.00pm
Sunday 12noon to 4.00pm.

The Church provides hand-held information boards in a large variety of languages which give information about the history of the church. Information panels situated around the church explain the stories of famous people who are connected to St Alfege Church. We have a small shop area which sells guide books, postcards, CDs and books.

Contact us

Church Office

Jenny Bracey, Church Administrator

General enquiries

Open Church Volunteers

Guided tours of the church

Hiring St Alfege Church Hall. The Hall is available on weekdays and for limited evening bookings (up to 20:00).

The Church Office is open **Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday** from 09:00 to 16:00. Tel: 020 8853 0687 Email: jenny.bracey@st-alfege.org.uk



Alfege - Saint & Martyr

In the 11th century, the abduction and murder of an archbishop was an act of almost unbelievable wickedness, and Alfege's martyrdom at Greenwich in 1012 attracted horrified attention all over Christendom. The impact on the Continent was the greater because at that time Greenwich belonged to the Abbey of St Peter at Ghent, a church well known as the prime defender of Christianity against the pagan Vikings.

The St Alfege Window, by Frances Spear

Born in about 954 AD, a young man named Alfege gave up his family's wealth in order to live as a hermit at Deerhurst in Gloucestershire, where he attracted a following and became Abbott of a community at Bath. In 984 he was appointed Bishop of Winchester, as a result of a vision sent to St Dunstan. At Winchester he was noted for



restoring the church and the organ, which became 'another wonder of the world' according to ancient sources. In 1006 he became the 29th Archbishop of Canterbury, by which time he was known and loved for his gentleness, his knowledge of the scriptures and his courage in going among Norsemen to convert them.

At this time, the Kent coast was subject to raids from Danish pirates, and in 1011 they laid siege to the City of Canterbury. Alfege, betrayed by one of his own monks, was captured and taken by ship round the Kent coast and up the River Thames to Greenwich. There he was held for six months and a ransom of £3,000 was demanded. Knowing that his people would be unable to afford this huge sum, Alfege refused to let them pay, and the captors carried out their threat to kill him. At a feast on Easter Day they bludgeoned him with ox bones and the hafts of their axes until one of the Danes, out of compassion, killed him by a single blow to the head with his axe.

Then, a miracle was reported - a wooden Danish oar dipped in Alfege's blood had sprouted. As a result, his body was taken to St Paul's Cathedral in the City of London. Eleven years later, on 15 June 1023, the body was moved by King Canute to Canterbury Cathedral and placed beneath the north side of the high altar; a memorial slab now marks the spot where his tomb was. The anniversary of his martyrdom (St Alfege's Day) is 19 April.

In 1078 Alfege was canonized; two churchmen, Archbishop Lanfranc and St Anselm agreed that sainthood had been achieved in the cause of divine justice. Possibly, they remembered his last known words; to the Danish cries of "Give us gold", he had replied, "The gold I give you is the Word of God". St Anselm said of him,

"He who dies for Justice dies for God"

These words are engraved on a slab, marking the place where he was martyred, in front of the sanctuary of St Alfege Church.

19 April 2012 will be the [millennium of the martyrdom of St Alfege](#), and there will be celebrations around the country at the many churches dedicated to him. At this church, which is so closely tied to his death, there will a pilgrimage from Southwark to Greenwich followed by a special service conducted by the Archbishop of Canterbury.