ST. MARY'S, SAFFRON WALDEN

A history and guide
by Dr. Kenneth Dixon

compiled and edited by
Hamish Walker

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original illustrations by
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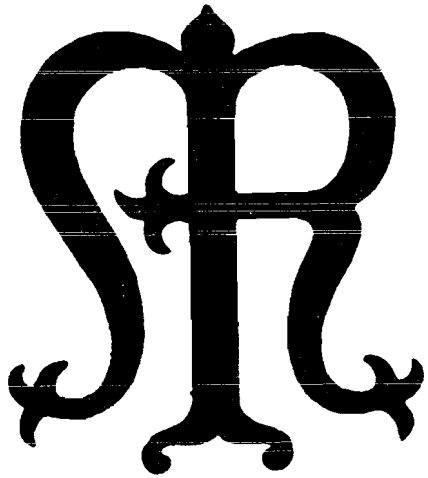
All profits on the sale of this book will be given to the 2000 Restoration Appeal Fund.



The Monogram of
the Blessed Virgin

The letters of the name 'Maria' are evident in this ancient symbol. A crown was sometimes placed over the monogram by mediaeval artists.

How lovely is thy dwelling place
O Lord of Hosts!
My soul longs, yea, faints,
For the courts of the Lord;
My heart and flesh sing for joy
To the living God.

Even the sparrow finds a home
And the swallow a nest for herself
Where she may lay her young;
At thy altars, O Lord of hosts,
My King and my God.
Blessed are those who dwell in thy house,
Ever singing thy praise!

It is a great privilege to be able to serve and worship God in such wonderful surroundings. For centuries St. Mary's Church has stood overlooking the town of Saffron Walden, witnessing to God's presence and, through the magnificence of its structure, giving glory to His holy name.

As well as being a witness and a place of worship, St. Mary's serves the community in many other ways. It is open every day for prayer and quiet for all those who need it, it is used for civic occasions and concerts, and it also attracts thousands of visitors to our town. Throughout its history, church members and the people of the town have endeavoured to care for the building to ensure that its beauty and glory will be enjoyed by future generations. It is, therefore, fitting that this History and Guide is being sold in aid of the 2000 Restoration Appeal.

I hope you will enjoy reading it as much as I have and that, like me, you will be inspired to look afresh at the splendour that surrounds us in the church. My sincere thanks to Ken Dixon and Hamish Walker and all who have contributed to this book.

Duncan Green
Rector of Saffron Walden
January 2000

EDITOR'S FOREWORD

First, a disclaimer: this booklet is meant for the congregation of St. Mary's and for the interested visitor. It is not intended for the serious student of church architecture or history and, as a consequence, we have not cluttered up the text with references to our sources - some of which anyway are the useful 'hearsay', anathema to the true historian! The 'acknowledgements' at the end list the principal sources used in preparing the work but special tribute must be paid, and grateful thanks given, to the Rev. Joy Russell-Smith both for original research and for careful checking of facts in the book, particularly those relating to the early years. Ken Dixon and I take full responsibility for any errors still remaining.

During my spell as Editor of the Parish Magazine from 1992 to 1997, I published many articles by Ken about aspects of the architecture of the church or its history. I spoke to him, therefore, to get his permission to republish those articles in book form to satisfy many requests which I had had, when acting as a guide to the church, for a book bringing together all the different facts, theories and stories about the history of St. Mary's - to find that he had already collected most of them together, plus other information, in a dissertation he had produced as an entry for the Mary Whiteman prize offered every other year by the Town Library Society.

In the end what we now have is mostly based on Ken's paper, with additional material culled from other sources, linked in what we hope is a helpful format for the non-specialist reader.

HAMISH WALKER
January 2000

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EARLIER CHURCHES

The Saxon period

We know nothing of any churches in Walden before the Norman Conquest but an earlier historian suggested that *'by AD 700 a church - probably a small wooden structure - stood on the ridge'*. This is now thought unlikely however. A considerable Saxon settlement was sited in the Slade valley to the south-west of the town and the discovery in 1876 of a large Saxon cemetery on the Gibson Estate with skeletons dating back to at least the 9th century argues that there would probably have been a church, almost certainly of wooden construction, in that area rather than some distance away on the other side of the valley which was not developed until the castle was built in the 12th century.

The Norman period

Domesday Book (begun in 1085) does not record a church here but this is true of many places in Domesday which probably did have a church at that time. It is highly likely that there would have been a church of some sort on such an important manor as this.

The earliest written reference to a church in Walden appears in the foundation Charter of Walden Abbey (see below), dated between 1139 and 1143. By this charter Geoffrey de Mandeville (grandson of the Geoffrey who had come over with William the Conqueror) gave to his foundation *'the church of Walden'* (and about eighteen others), 220 acres of land at Walden, and a mill. Where 'the church of Walden' was sited is not recorded but the castle on Bury Hill was probably built between 1125 and 1141 and would almost certainly have included a chapel within the bailey, which at that time extended from the common to the other side of the High Street. Whether this was 'the church of Walden' or whether a Saxon church was referred to is not known but what is certain is that when the Howard vault at the east end of the present church was closed up in 1860, evidence of Norman remains were discovered inside. It is worth remembering that the castle itself fell into disrepair in about 1160.

Walden Abbey

It may be of interest here to record briefly the history of the Abbey. In 1136 (or thereabouts) Geoffrey de Mandeville assembled the Bishops of London, Ely and Norwich down by the Cam where the Slade flows into it and a cemetery there was consecrated by them. 'William of Luffield' was recruited as the first Prior and a handful of monks built a small dwelling and formed a community dedicated to 'God, St. Mary and the blessed Apostle James'. They observed the Rule of St. Benedict.

'Reginald', the second Prior, was appointed in 1164 and was a man of both ability and influence - he had previously served in the royal government. By 1190, when Richard I agreed to raise the status of the monastery to that of Abbey, the revenues of the monastery had been greatly increased and there were 26 monks.

As with many monasteries, however, life and wealth had declined by the sixteenth century. In 1534 the community accepted the supremacy of Henry VIII and it was closed in 1537. The administration of the Abbey at the time of its surrender was in the hands of William More, a steward of Lord Audley. (The last monastic Abbot had disgraced himself by being secretly married and, as a consequence, had been exiled!) William More became Vicar of Walden, and later Bishop of Colchester, and the remaining eight monks were pensioned off.

In 1538 the Abbey, all its property and its right to appoint a Vicar at Walden were granted by Henry VIII to his Lord Chancellor, Thomas Audley, as a reward for his work in pushing through the necessary legislation for the dissolution of the monasteries and other services for the King.

The early mediaeval church

Earlier histories, including the 1882 Saffron Walden Almanac, held that the church was rebuilt between 1237 and 1258. This appears to have been based on a misunderstanding. In 1237 an 'indulgence' (forerunner of today's 'faculty') was granted for the

fabric of the *Abbey* church and it was this church which was consecrated on St. Mark's day in 1258, as recorded in the Chronicles of Walden Abbey. At some point in the early 13th century, when the outer defences of the castle had been demolished, a new parish church was erected on Bury Hill. The arcades of the present chancel and the arches to the north and south chapels are 'Early English Gothic', the dominant style of the 1250s. The carvings at the east end of the north aisle are 'Decorated Gothic', the style usually dated to the first half of the 14th century, although these carvings are later than this - possibly even as late as the early 15th century. The chancel arches and these carvings are the only parts of the earlier mediaeval church still to be seen.

THE PRESENT CHURCH - the early years

During the 15th century many parish churches were being rebuilt and Walden was no exception. By 1437 work on enlarging the church had already begun and further stages, such as the building of the south porch and the beginning of a south aisle, are recorded in detail in the 15th century churchwardens' accounts. In 1442, for example, the accounts show a payment of 3s 4d (approximately 17p) *"... for pargettynge of ... south end"* as well as *"payments for cartloads of lime and for digging sand"* and *"payments to Richard Croye, labourer, for the new work"*. In 1443 there is a payment for *"ironwork for the window of glass at the west end"*.

It is recorded in the Annals of John Stowe that on Candlemas Eve in 1445 there was *'a great wethering of wind, hale, snow, rayne and thunder with lightening whereby the churches of Baldock in Hertfordshire, Walden in Essex and others were sorely shaken, and in the same storm St. Paul's Cathedral was set on fire'.*

The churchwardens' accounts show many payments for the building works. For example, Richard Glasewryzte is paid for helping the stonemason with scaffolding. For raising heavy stones

to the top of the high walls a crane was used. In 1459 *'timber for the crane'* cost 3s 4d (approximately 17p) and *'cords for tying the crane'* cost 3s. There is also a payment of 4d (just under 2p) for *'the carriage of the crane from the windmill to the church'*. The crane would have been worked by a treadmill.

In 1485 big architectural ideas were being planned and on June 24th the churchwardens went to Cambridge for a meeting with Simon Clerk, master mason at Eton and King's College, Cambridge. Also present was a young man named John Wastell. Although Wastell's name is never found again in the (scanty) documentation concerning the rebuilding of Saffron Walden church, his presence at that meeting and the unlikely possibility that the churchwardens would have entered into an agreement with a master mason in his seventies without some assurance that the work would be completed in the event of Clerk's death, strongly suggest that Wastell was there to provide that assurance. Clerk did in fact die in c. 1489 and Wastell, therefore, is always credited with being the master mason responsible for the present church.

The great stone nave is generally regarded as one of the finest achievements of John Wastell, who also worked on the fan vaulting of King's College Chapel, Cambridge, Great St. Mary's church in that city and the Bell Harry Tower of Canterbury Cathedral. He was also responsible for the retrochoirs of Peterborough Cathedral and Ely Cathedral for which, it is said, he practised his techniques on Saffron Walden church.

Between 1485 and 1490/91 the present south aisle was completed and roofed but the nave arcade walls were not commenced until 1497 when Wastell returned from his work at Canterbury.

Unfortunately no record now exists of when the tower was built but usually a tower was built first to allow for settlement before the nave was attached to it. It seems likely that this was the case at Saffron Walden for, as can be seen, the most westerly of Wastell's nave arches are truncated to fit the space available. The

magnificent nave columns with their decorated spandrels were cleverly designed by Wastell to attract the maximum amount of light. The nave was completed by about 1510. John Wastell himself died in c. 1515 and no record has been found indicating who was responsible for completing the work but by about 1530 the church was finished, although Lord Audley carried out further alterations to the south chapel before his death in 1544.

The interior

The first difference which the parishioner of today would have noticed about the church in 1530 was a 'tabernacle' in the chancel containing a very large image of the Virgin Mary. Not only was the image itself very costly but it had to be repainted at least three times - also at vast expense - before those who had commissioned it were satisfied.

Another major difference in the building concerned the altars. There were at least six, dedicated respectively to St. Nicholas, Our Lady (St. Mary), St. Catherine, the Trinity, the Rood and the Holy Cross, in addition, of course, to the High Altar itself. Some sources also indicate altars dedicated to St. George and St. Mary Magdalen. It may well have been that these altars were also in the previous church; mediaeval churches usually had many altars. Certainly the Trinity altar was mentioned in the churchwardens' accounts for 1457. Two of these altars would have been in the north and south chapels and the others probably at the eastern end of the two aisles where bays are clearly to be seen today.

In addition to the chapels and altars today's visitor would have marvelled at the stained glass and the general sumptuousness of the furnishings and fittings. The citizens were proud of their church and provided pictures, carpets, candlesticks in silver and gold, vestments, gold and silver plate etc. The Saffron Walden Year Book for 1909 evokes something of the glory of the new church: *'It is altogether beyond us to conceive the appearance of this noble interior when, with its windows, those walls of glass glowing in glorious colour with the pictured legends of the saints, and adorned with statues and paintings, it looked down upon the elaborate ceremonial of gorgeously vestured priests, on the*

prostrated congregation on the rush strewn floor, and on the rich altar vessels gleaming through the censer smoke.'

(It is unlikely, incidentally, that the congregation actually 'prostrated' themselves. Frequent genuflections, yes; prostrations, no.)

As we shall see, however, these adornments did not, alas, survive for very long.

Why was it built on such a scale?
In the first place, as already mentioned, it was a time of church building. Many of the most splendid parish churches of the Middle Ages date from the later part of the fifteenth century: Stoke by Clare and Long Melford, to name but two relatively local churches, date from this period, and Thaxted church, although begun in the mid fourteenth century, was not finished until around 1510. Could there, perhaps, have been some local rivalry here? There certainly was three centuries later when Saffron Walden added a spire to the church and made certain that it was some twelve feet higher than that of Thaxted! It has always been Saffron Walden people's proud boast that theirs is the largest parish church in Essex.

There was also an intense and united religious feeling, probably coupled with a feeling of emulation, stimulated by the growth of richly endowed guilds. Religious and secular life in those days were closely intertwined and the church was the centre of everyday life. Church ales (sometimes brewed by the churchwardens) were on sale there and scales were available for other transactions.

Where did the money come from?
In the early 16th century Walden was a Wool Staple town whose output, taken together with the not inconsiderable profits from the saffron trade - used not only in cooking as today but also as a medicament and, most importantly, as a dye for the wool - meant that the town and its citizens were very prosperous. The churchwardens' accounts as early as 1439 show collections from

many different people in the town. In 1442 there were further collections and, some forty years later, Henry VII is recorded as having given oak trees from Chesterford Park for the church.

A number of wealthy individuals lived locally and contributed generously to the building but a large part of the money was raised by the efforts of John Leche, who was Vicar of Walden from 1489 to 1521, and his sister Jane (Johane) who married Thomas Bradbury, the Master of the Mercers Company in the City of London and Lord Mayor of London from 1509 until his death early the following year. Her name lives on in Saffron Walden, of course, in the title of Dame Bradbury's School in Ashdon Road. These two, together with four other notable citizens of the town, created the Guild of the Holy Trinity whose history and purposes are set out in Appendix 7. It was chiefly through the work of this Guild that the building of the church was carried through to its successful conclusion.

1530 to 1600

Following Henry VIII's break with Rome in 1534, and his death in 1547, the character of the church changed steadily. In 1536/37 the number of Saints Days was drastically reduced; in 1547 the clergy were ordered to destroy images, and the 'burning of lights' anywhere, except for two candles on the altar, was forbidden.

As we have already seen, Walden Abbey was closed in 1537 following the dissolution of the monasteries and, in 1553, special Commissions were appointed to schedule the possessions of all Parish Churches. St. Mary's did not escape and everything in the church was confiscated except for one cope, one chalice and patten and a cover for the 'communion table' which were handed back to the churchwardens *'for the ministration of devyne service'*. In addition the Commissioners returned to the churchwardens *'a little rounde box to carry the Sacrament in with a purse to putt it in'*. This is believed to be the only instance known where the Commissioners allowed any provision for reserving the

sacrament for the sick. One other item was allowed to remain: *'a egle or lectorn of latten'* (an early form of brass).

In the early days of the reign of Elizabeth I (1558-1603) therefore, the church looked very different from how it had appeared in 1530. Gone were all the side altars, gone were the statues from their niches, the paintings of the saints on the side walls had been whitewashed over and even the High Altar had been replaced by a plain wooden communion table. The rood beam had been sawn off flush with the walls (the evidence remains to this day) and some kind of pews or seats were provided.

1600 to 1750

We now have a fully 'Reformed Catholic' church. The churchwardens' accounts no longer contain references to purchases of candles, or to the Easter ceremonies. Lists were drawn up of 'recusants' - parishioners (ie. Catholics) who refused to attend church. There was considerable controversy about the administration of communion at the altar rail. One woman refused because she was a weak woman and the communion table was situated on 'lofty and bleak stairs'!

Walden was firmly in 'roundhead' country during the Civil War (1642-51) and in the years leading up to it. There is an entry in the churchwardens' accounts in August 1640: *'to George Hull for work to make the dores fast when the soldiers that laye in the towne did attempt to break into the church'.* But these were pressed men of the King's army raised to fight the Scots. In 1643 we read: *'to Achell Shelford for takeing downe the Crosses and ye Images in the church'.* In that year the church had a narrow escape: the Puritan General Dowsing was appointed 'Parliamentary Visitor for Cambs. and Suffolk'. He visited churches in those areas, including Ickleton, Duxford, Linton and Haverhill and destroyed 'angels, altars, communion tables,

chancel steps and superstitious pictures' but presumably his writ did not run in Essex and St. Mary's was left alone.

In 1647 General Fairfax marched from Nottingham for London and halted at Saffron Walden where he made his headquarters, probably in the Sun Inn on Market Hill. The church was used for meetings of the troops including those with Oliver Cromwell. It is possible that whatever remained of the fine stained glass in the church, following the activities of the Elizabethan zealots, was destroyed at that time. Certainly there is only one small piece of original stained glass still remaining and that, it is said, because it was away being restored at the time!

But we are moving away from our history of the church building. One subject, then as now, dominated the churchwardens' accounts: the fabric. In 1628 *'three tonnes of stone'* were purchased from Cambridge and there were payments to masons. In 1633 there was payment for *'worke done about the roof of the south side of the church'* (shades of the 1999/2000 restoration appeal!). The roof was in such a bad way, indeed, that birds were entering the church. In 1646 or thereabouts John Gamage was paid 2s (10p) *'for shouting the birds in the church'.* In 1699 John Wyat was paid 10s (50p) *'for killing the dovelings in the church'.* And foxes in the church had to be destroyed in 1699 and 1707.

The accounts also show sums received from time to time when a 'church rate' was levied on the townsfolk - partly for repairs needed to the fabric:

1628	*Received of a rate towards the repair of the church*	*£55 12s 10d*
1634	*Money gathered by a rate*	*£33 5s 4d*
1655	*Received by the church rate*	*£56 7s 10d*

and so on.

But difficulties arose, even in those days, over the collection of these rates: *'At a Parish Meeting severall disputes arose in relation to ye repairs of ye Parish Church of Walden aforesaid ... and the obstanticy* (sic) *of several parishioners in not paying*

them by means one third of those rates were never gathered so that ye persons that did pay were oppressed'.

The problem was solved by *'what money should be exspended ... towards the repairs of the church shall be paid by the Overseers out of the Poor Rate of the Parish'.*

A church court also imposed fines on offenders:

1629/30 Taken of Michael Nott .... being taken at play in Divine Service
1631 Received of Widow Archer for her sonne being taken at cards in Devyne Servyce

1750 to 1850

Just as in 1445, so in July 1769 there was 'a great wethering of wind ...' and St. Mary's was struck by lightning and seriously damaged. Initially it was believed that repairs would cost about £200 - even that being a substantial sum to find - but it soon became obvious that in fact the damage was much more severe. It proved impossible at that time to raise the sort of money required and in 1779 the Patron, Sir John Griffin Griffin, drawing attention to the condition of the church, suggested that a subscription list be started. Nothing came of this, however. (Sir John was granted the barony of Walden [4th Lord Howard de Walden] in 1784 and was created 1st Lord Braybrooke in 1788.)

In May 1790 the Bishop of London came down for a confirmation and expressed astonishment at the courage of the people of Walden in assembling in so dilapidated a building and it was temporarily closed, the services being held at Littlebury. The churchwardens called a meeting of the town's inhabitants to consider a report from a London architect, Mr. Brettingham, who suggested re-roofing with Westmoreland slate rather than repairing the existing roof with lead *'by which a considerable saving would be made'.*

This was agreed, Mr. Brettingham was appointed as the architect, and the estimated cost was £3,855. (The final cost, however, was nearer £8,000!) Although Lord Howard expressed willingness to help financially he was not prepared to meet the whole cost and other methods had to be found. An Act of Parliament (the Saffron Walden Church Act, 6th June 1791) authorised loans in the form of bonds, bearing interest of 4%, to be issued up to a total of £4,000 to be repaid out of the rates, and two Briefs were issued which raised, respectively, £250 and £160.

These ecclesiastical Briefs involved the circulation of an appeal, authorised by the Lord Chancellor, to all places of worship in other parishes. St. Mary's had in the past contributed to such Briefs from other parishes, for instance:

1689 collected for ye sufferers by fire at Bungay £2 14s 8d
1690 collected for ye sufferers by fire at Bishop Lavington, Wilts 14s 8d

The remainder of the money was raised by gifts, notably from Lord Howard and his wife.

The rebuilding was dogged by disputes between the architect and the builder, Mr. Richard Dyche of Stretford, who proved to be a very inferior worker and in the end he was dismissed and another builder appointed.

In January 1791 a Church Rate of 1s 6d (7.5p) in the pound was made to enable the work to be started and early in 1792 the north aisle was shut off and fitted up for the continuance of services at a cost of £60 for which a 3d (1.5p) rate was levied. (Much later the partition was taken down and used for making new pews.)

The building was saved but the restoration as a whole was not a success - indeed it was said that it destroyed more than it preserved. Such stained glass as Cromwell's troops and the 1769 storm had left intact was removed together with all the remaining mediaeval carvings and monuments. A large number of brasses were sold for scrap - the small number that survive on the north

wall were taken to Audley End House as souvenirs and were restored to the church in 1901 - and many of the ledger stones which paved the church were removed to the west end of the nave.

One or two additions to the church at this time are worthy of note. The first, a pew loft for the Howard family where the organ loft is today, has long since gone although a model of it can be seen outside the chapel at Audley End House. It is alleged that there was a fireplace in the loft and when Lady Howard had had enough of the sermon, she would poke the fire vigorously as a sign that the vicar should wind up his address!

A second addition to the church is still very much with us however: the painting now acting as reredos in the north chapel which was given to the church by Lord Braybrooke in 1793. At that time it formed the reredos to the High Altar in the main sanctuary where there was no east window. Lord Howard also presented some valuable plate to the church. His major contributions to the restoration are acknowledged in the tablet above the door to the south porch (see page 33).

It is reported that 'a cumbrous gallery' was also erected in the north aisle. This was removed in 1860.

Although the '1790 restoration' was complete by the end of the century, inevitably fabric repairs continued to be necessary in the following years - in 1822 and 1824, for instance, numerous repairs were required. In 1820 railings were installed around the churchyard, along with 29 oak posts. In 1823 entrance gates were added to the south side and about this time a house located on the east side of the church was purchased and pulled down to provide more churchyard space for burials.

In 1822/3 also the gallery at the west end was enlarged to accommodate a new organ built by John Vincent. Some parts of this original instrument are still to be found in today's organ. At the same time a clock, by Thwaites and Reed, was installed in the tower. New pews were erected in the south aisle and, probably in 1823, the north porch was converted into a vestry

for the clergy. In 1824, behind and on either side of the High Altar, the Ten Commandments. the Lord's Prayer and the Apostles' Creed were indited.

But the big event of the 1830s was the building of the spire. In 1530 the tower was just that - a tower. Some years before 1700 the wooden-framed lead-covered 'lantern', which appears in the 1780 print and which was used by Henry Winstanley for his experiments for the Eddystone lighthouse (built between 1696 and 1699 and destroyed, together with its designer, in a storm in 1703), was erected.

In 1831 it was decided to build a spire, the funds for which were raised by a charge on the rates and by local subscription. There is a well-known story of the vicar soliciting a contribution from Wyatt George Gibson, a prominent Walden personality and benefactor, who was also a Quaker. 'What!' he replied, 'Ask a good Quaker to subscribe to a church house spire? I'll do no such thing'. Then, after a pause, 'But I'll tell thee what a good Quaker can do - he can give thee £300 towards pulling the old one down!'

The architect for the spire was another Quaker - Thomas Rickman, best known for his work on the New Court of St. John's College, Cambridge. Throughout his early years as a grocer's apprentice in Saffron Walden, in an insurance office and as a doctor, Rickman developed a taste for drawing and a passionate interest in mediaeval archaeology. It was he who popularised the now accepted terminology for mediaeval architectural styles - Early English, Perpendicular, Gothic etc.

1850 to 2000

The church in 1850 has been described as follows:
'... a cold uncomfortable place of worship - no warming apparatus, high pews, slanting pew galleries ... and a small gallery at the west end. Lord Braybrooke's pew was in the middle of the chancel arch and was popularly known as 'the Opera Box'. The pulpit, a three-decker, with a sounding board on it [this top

now forms the table outside the choir vestry in the south porch], *stood halfway down the nave on the left. Half the congregation faced east, the other half west. In front of the pulpit stood a large square pew for the Corporation, the Mayor's chair being raised a little and facing the pulpit'.*

All this was to change in 1860, however, when a further major restoration took place during which the church services were held in what is now the museum. The high 'box' pews were removed and replaced by chairs, (the present low pews were gradually introduced around 1885), the tower arch, which had been blocked up for many years, was opened up and, in the chancel, a new reredos was built and the present east window installed (see page 39).

As part of the 1860 restoration the Howard Vault beneath the High Altar was blocked in. This vault contains the coffins of the ten Earls of Suffolk who owned the Audley End Estate and those of Lord Howard de Walden and his two wives. Partly under the south porch and partly under the south aisle is a vaulted crypt used as a charnel house until the 1860 restoration works. It is now used as a boiler house and general storage area. The font was removed from the north chapel to the west end of the nave. (It was moved to its present position in the 1930s.)

During the Victorian period much of the present stained glass was installed. Opinions differ as to its quality. One writer describes the period as 'a time when the art of glass painting was at a very low ebb'! Others enthuse over the quality of, particularly, the east window (1862) and that at the west end under the tower (1868). Truly beauty is in the eye of the beholder!

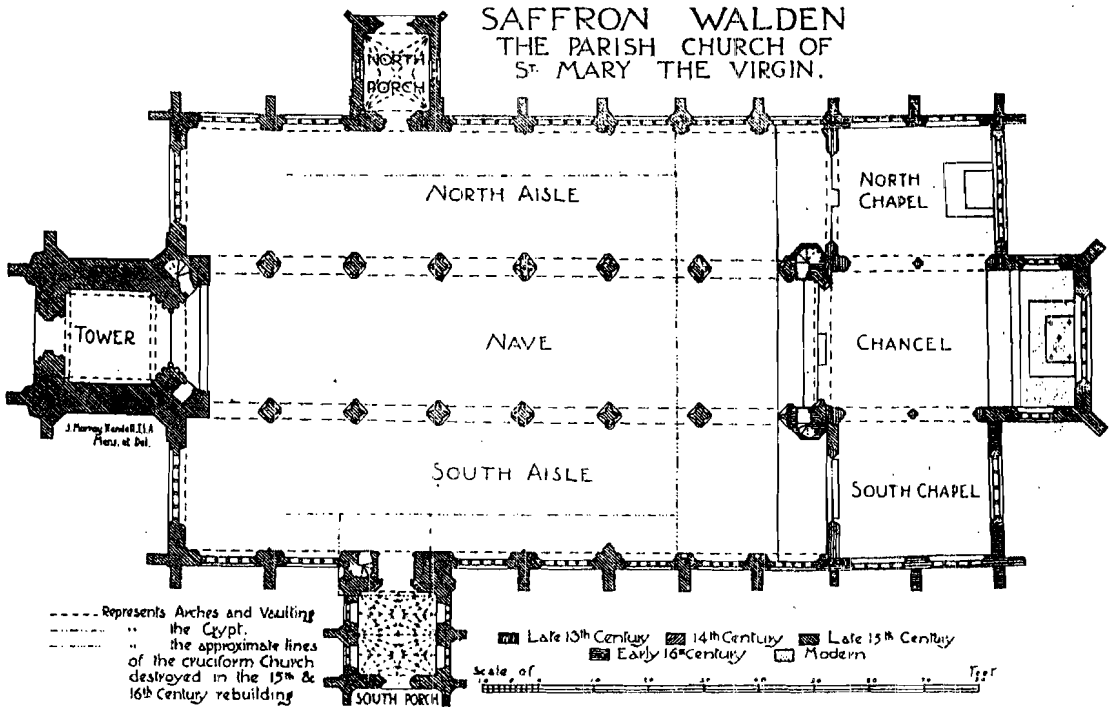
For many years the south chapel had been reserved for private prayer for members of the Braybrooke family but in 1916 Lord Braybroooke allowed the choir to use it as their vestry and the south chapel thereafter became public property. In 1924 the lower half of the present rood screen was erected, the figures above being added in 1951.

In 1932 a severe infestation of wood beetle was discovered in all parts of the roof and was the subject of one of the periodic public appeals which the church has to make from time to time. In contrast, the cost of further re-roofing works in 1959 was met from accumulated church funds. The lead covering was removed and copper sheeting fixed instead (which, in its turn, on the south side of the church, is the subject of the 2000 restoration). More seriously, one ridge beam, some fifteen inches square, was discovered to have been eaten away for thirteen and a half inches! If another eighteen months delay to repairs had occurred, it was reckoned that the roof of the nave would have collapsed.

Over the following ten years other essential repairs of the stonework generally and of the pinnacles and parapets of the north and south aisles in particular were carried out but, in 1970, it was realised that major restoration of the stonework was necessary. The square iron bands around the clerestory (thought to have been put in in the 1790 restoration) had become loose and rusty. The walls of the nave clerestory were bulging outwards and to contain this, concrete tie beams were installed along the tops of the walls, suitably anchored to other tie beams in the roof. Reinforcement of the stonework was carried out in stainless steel.

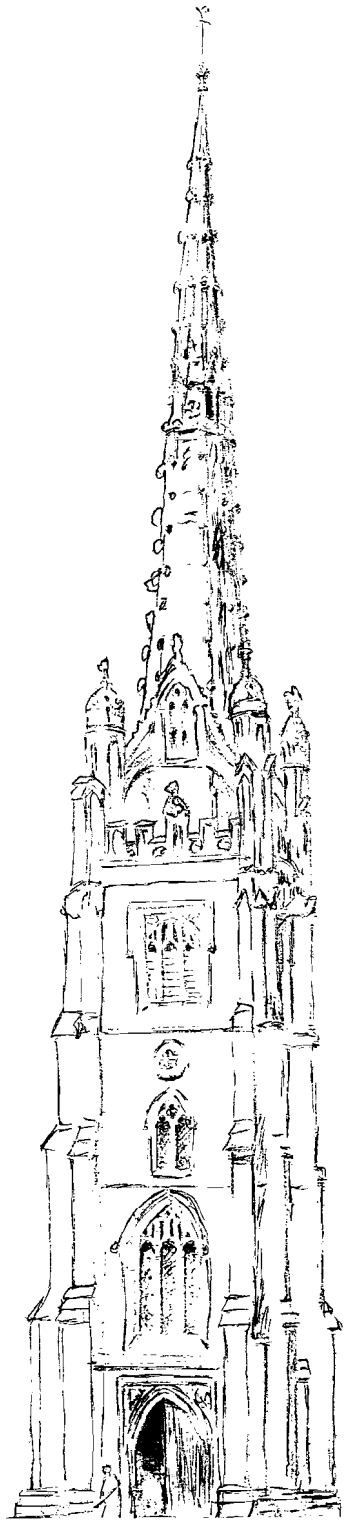
Work on the spire began in November 1973. The upper part was stabilised with the construction of two concrete cruciforms to replace the previous wooden ones and a very great amount of decayed stonework was cut out and replaced. The cost of this work was in the region of £300,000 of which £100,000 was received from the Department of the Environment. The remainder was raised by a very hard-working Appeal Committee headed by Lord Braybrooke's son Robin - the present Lord Braybrooke.

In 2000 the covering of the roofs of the south aisle and south chapel is to be renewed (in lead) and various restoration works to some of the windows - notably those at the west end of the north aisle and at the east end of the south chapel - are to be undertaken. A public appeal for £200,000 has been launched.



PART 2

A guide to the church



THE TOWER

As we have seen, nothing is known about the building of the tower. The masonry of the lowest stages is crude, the stone ('clunch') coming for the most part from the Barrington quarries near Cambridge and from Lincolnshire. When the spire was added in 1831, the walls proved insufficently strong for the purpose and it was found necessary to take down the 'greater part of the tower' and rebuild it with fine quality limestone, Monks' Park oolite, one of the Bath stones, quarried near Corsham in Wiltshire.

There is no record of how the earlier tower was finished off, the oddly shaped 'lantern' seen in old prints being erected probably around 1700. That lantern was demolished (the scrap value realising the princely sum of £31 18s. 0d [£31.90]!) and the present spire was erected in 1831 (see page 19).

The bells

The tower houses the bells, the earliest dated 1797 and cast by John Briant of Hertford. This bell was one of a new ring of eight cast by Briant in 1797/98 where the heaviest (the tenor) weighed 24 cwt (1219 kg.) at the time. Two of these bells required re-casting (probably due to cracking), one in 1813 and the other in 1849, by the Whitechapel bell foundry, one of only two foundries still in business in the UK today. The bells were augmented to a ring of twelve in 1914 by the addition of four treble bells by Alfred Bowel of Ipswich. He was the only bell founder at the time who said the entire ring could be installed on the same level in our slender tower. Unfortunately the tonal quality of the new bells was poor, so they were re-cast at Whitechapel in 1928.

The last restoration was in 1962 when the entire ring was re-tuned and hung in a new frame by John Taylor & Co. of Loughborough, the tenor now weighing just over a ton (22cwt. 2 qtrs. 24 lbs to be exact, or approximately 1154 kg.). They are now regarded as one of the finest rings of twelve bells in the country. Full details of the Peal can be found on the north side of

the tower arch where the steps lead up to the ringing room.

Although the present Peal, therefore, can only be dated back to the time of the 1790s restoration, there is evidence that there were bells in the church well before then. The churchwardens' accounts for 1450 show payments *'to men for ringing the great bell in a violent wind'* and, in 1661, *'bread and beer'* was provided for ringing on Coronation Day. In 1623 Thomas Turner, a local man, lost his way in the woods and was enabled to find his way home by following the sound of the Walden bells. In gratitude for his deliverance, he left an endowment in his will for the bells to be rung and for a sermon to be preached on the anniversary of his death - a custom which is still honoured with Great Ringing Day, now held on the last Saturday in June each year.

In mediaeval times the bells were an important part of daily life. Apart from their normal use before services to summon the faithful to prayer, the Sanctus bell was rung at the elevation of the Host in the pre-Reformation Mass, the Pancake bell summoned the parish to confession before the Lenten Fast, the Gleaning bell marked the end of harvest, the Passing bell (today sounded three times for the death of a child, six times for a woman and nine for a man) and the Knell (with one stroke for every year of the deceased's age) called the faithful then as now to add their prayers for the deliverance of the soul. There were also Curfew bells and Fire bells (sounded to summon assistance when there was a fire).

The Reformation, however, brought changes. Puritanism was actively hostile to bell-ringing since practice of the art gave enjoyment to the ringers and this was thought sinful on the Sabbath day! Even as late as 1859 a clergyman, addressing a clerical meeting, likened bell-ringing to chess or violin playing *'and we know what view we take of Sunday chess players or Sunday concerts. Let me implore every clergyman to exercise his authority and put an extinguisher on all Sunday ringing'.*

Although the origins of the Saffron Walden Society of Bellringers

almost certainly go back down the centuries at least as far as Thomas Turner's adventure, the earliest set of ringing rules still extant dates from 1800 when the members agreed to meet at the church every Tuesday evening by *'a quarter after six o'clock ... and there to stop and Ring a Peal or part of a Peal...'.* The ringers still practice on a Tuesday evening but now at 7.45 pm..

There are many tablets in the tower porch and in the ringing chamber recording Changes rung on the bells of the church. It is also recorded in a newspaper in 1754 that *'on 25th December the Society of young ringers of this town ... did ring the true Peal of Grandsire Triples, composed of 148 Bobs with two Singles, which they effected in three hours and twenty minutes'.*

By the middle of the 19th century the reputation of the Walden ringers had declined but a strong revival started in the 1860s with the arrival of Fred Pitstow and his brothers Nathan and Ernest. When Fred's son Alfred resigned from the post of Captain of the Ringers in 1940 the Parish Magazine commented *'He was one of a company who tackled successfully some of the most intricate problems connected with the ringing art... which placed the Walden Society of Ringers on the highest pinnacle of campanology'.* The tablets referred to above show the long association of the Pitstow family with bell-ringing at St. Mary's over the last 150 years.

The Society continues to this day but one does not now hear the handbells which the ringers used to ring in the Cross Keys over a pint following a bellringing session!

The clock

The church clock stands in the tower as well. In the churchwardens' accounts for 1460 there is an entry which reads *'item: pd for repairing the clock to a man of Colchester 3s 4d'* (17p). In an inventory of church goods made in 1552 a Sanctus bell and 'the clock' are mentioned. The present clock was erected in 1823 at a cost of £240 *'to include fixing'.* The Westminster chimes were added in 1875 but they were disconnected when the

spire was restored in the 1970s and only reconnected in 1989. At that time they rang all through the night, to the distress of the neighbours one of whom made a point of telephoning the Rector at three in the morning to say that he (the complainant) had been woken by the clock and did not see why the Rector (who lived on the other side of the town) should not be woken up too! Night silencers were installed so that the clock did not chime or strike after ten o'clock at night or before eight in the morning.

It is worth recording that at a Vestry meeting in 1847 it was ordered that John Kent, who had the care of the church clock, should take the time from the station at Audley End (then 'Wenden' station. Greenwich time was signalled daily at noon to London and to the railway termini. Train guards, who carried accurate watches, would check the clocks at stations en route.) Howard Newman, of A. James (Jewellers) Ltd., Saffron Walden, who today has the care of the clock and who has provided much of the information for this section, presumably uses more modern methods of setting the correct time!

THE NAVE

The nave is one of the glories of the church, lofty , 54 feet (16.46 metres) high and with plenty of light from the clerestory windows.

Above the west door is a stained glass window by J. Powell & Sons of Whitechapel (1868). The window represents the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple and the words from the Nunc Dimittis appear in memory of Ralph Clutton B.D., Vicar of the Parish from 1844-1868, and his wife Isabella.

The modern entry porch was erected in the late 1980s as a gift from The Friends of the Parish Church (see Appendix 8).

The Royal Arms over the tower arch are those of King Charles II which, by law, had to be put up in every Parish Church following the return of Charles from exile. On the north side of the tower arch is the Garter Banner of Lord Butler, MP for Saffron Walden from 1929 to 1965. (Note the rebus: it shows three butler's serving cups!) His grave is to be found in the north east corner of the churchyard.

The ledger stones

As the name suggests, the ledger stones are a record of the life and death of the person at one time buried below. In mediaeval days people wished to be buried in their church, preferably near the Holy Rood or, in our church, near the 'marrying door' which is now hung as the door to the south porch. The practice was discontinued in the eighteenth century when space became at a premium. During the restorations of the 1790s and the 1860s many of the ledger stones which once paved the church were removed but those which remain display some splendid Stuart and Georgian ledgers.

Armorial ledgers can easily be seen as the successors to the brasses of pre-Reformation days, of which there were originally also very many in the church. However they are really in the

line of succession from the mediaeval Cross slabs which bore shields of arms. After the Restoration of the Monarchy in 1660 the number of those bearing arms increased greatly, spreading out to the middle and professional classes and town officials. Our ledger stones include memorials to John Fiske (a surgeon and for many years a member of the Corporation of the town), to William Holgate (Treasurer of the town in 1625) and, in the north chapel, to James Robinett (a Mayor who died in 1697). The William Holgate stone is particularly notable not just for the flowing mantling and the blazon with two bulls' heads but also for the name of the town which is recorded as 'Waldeniae Crocosae'.

There are some thirty (Belgian?) slate ledgers at the west end of the church, of which thirteen bear arms. There are a number of other ledgers in the north chapel which, as this was known as the 'town chapel' is perhaps not surprising. The north aisle also contains the remains of some mediaeval brass slabs. Glance down at the history beneath your feet and spare a prayer perhaps for the departed.

The ceiling

The bosses in the magnificently carved roof are mainly variations of the Tudor rose. All the other bosses bear the devices of members of the Guild of the Holy Trinity which provided funds for the building. The Bourchier knot (Henry Bourchier - 2nd Earl of Essex who died in 1540) can be easily identified. He was prominent politically and succeeded to the Earldom of Essex in 1483. His wife was also a member of the Guild. (The Bourchier knot is also to be seen in the north aisle in the spandrels of the arch opposite the north porch door and, externally, among the carvings above the clerestory windows.)

Another boss shows the star, or 'mollet', of the De Vere family. The device is also to be found on the handle of the door at the chancel steps leading up to the organ loft. The De Veres were a very important local family. John, the 13th Earl of Oxford who died in 1512, owned property in the neighbourhood. The family seat was at Castle Hedingham. He was godfather to King Henry VIII.

The double eagle, unusual in that the eagle faces north/south and no claws or legs are shown, is a device more usually associated with the Holy Roman Empire and may here be a punning reference to William Byrde. The cross on one boss relates to Sir William Woodhall, and the pomegranate is a device of Henry VIII's first wife, Catherine of Aragon who, together with the King, was a member of the Guild.

Above the clerestory, the crests held by the angels are mainly Braybrooke family crests including the Latimer cross, the Howard lion and also the De Mandeville crest - a shield divided quarterly red and yellow.

The spandrels of the middle arch show a catherine wheel in honour of Katherine Semar, one of the founders of the Guild of the Holy Trinity.

The two bays in the roof nearest the rood screen are highly decorated and of special interest. This was, of course, the ceiling over the rood altar in the previous nave and in the early days of the present building. On each side there are a series of demi-angels, crowned, surpliced, and with outspread wings holding between each two a Royal Crown, a Tudor Rose, a Fleur-de-Lys, a Beaufort portcullis or a pomegranate. Opportunity was taken in the 1970s to restore these designs so as to show the fine detail of the blue collars of the angels which have very crinkly surfaces of heavy material. The eastern tie beams were also recoloured to show the leaf pattern design of a hawthorn leaf - the device of King Henry VII who picked up the crown from a hawthorn bush at the Battle of Bosworth.

The present rood screen was given to the church in 1924 by Mr. W. F. Tuke in memory of his wife. The design was by the eminent architect, Sir Charles Nicholson and the work was carried out by E. W. Beckwith of Coggeshall. In 1951 Mr. Anthony Tuke, Mr W. F. Tuke's son, paid for the cross and attendant figures, part of the original Nicholson design but not realised in 1924, to be erected.

In the top left hand corner of the solid upper screen is a leveret, carved in remembrance of a family closely linked with the church for many years. (It is said that Beckwith was having his lunch sitting on the tombstone outside the door to the Parish Rooms and, noticing that it was the grave of a Mr. Leverett, decided to carve a young hare on the screen.)

On the stringing above the spandrels on the north side there is a series of small stone carved bosses. On the sixth boss back from the rood screen is the carved face of a man. This is traditionally believed to be John Wastell, the Master Mason responsible for the building of the church.

SOUTH AISLE

In the window at the west end of the aisle there is a small medallion of old stained glass which once formed part of a much larger window showing the Adoration of the Magi. This is the only piece of mediaeval glass still remaining in the church. The head is probably that of Margaret of Anjou, the redoubtable wife of King Henry VI. Margaret has another connection with Saffron Walden church: she visited the Abbey in 1452 when on a progress to Norwich from London and the bell-ringers, who were disgruntled that she had not seen fit to visit the town and the church, and did not, therefore, greet her with a peal, were further incensed when they were fined 2s. (10p) as a penalty!

The chest behind the pews is thought to be late 15th century and is now used to house church linen.

The font, also late 15th century but restored in the 1790s, was placed in this position in the 1930s having previously stood near the west door - and before that in the north and south chapels! The cover is modern. The octagonal table originally formed the sounding board above the old pulpit, replaced in 1860.

The muniments room above the south porch is described in Appendix 7. This room originally was the meeting place of the Guild of the Holy Trinity.

Above the door to the south porch is a Latin inscription put up at the time of the 1790 restoration and may be translated as

This ancient most holy temple founded to the highest
glory, almost ruined, was restored by
John Griffin, Lord Howard de Walden,
1st Lord Braybrooke
Patron and Parishioner

1791 1792 1793

In the spandrels above the arch opposite the door to the south porch may be seen a representation of the saffron crocus, the cultivation of which was so important to the economy of the town at the time the present church was built. Further down the aisle in the spandrels of the third arch from the end are carvings of scallop shells and of a pilgrim's staff and satchel. The scallop shell is the emblem of St. James, who was the patron saint of Walden Abbey (see page 8).

On the wall opposite are statues of St. James and of the Virgin Mary put in place in the 1920s. The statue of St. James was donated by the mother of a young man who was killed in the First World War. The sculptor took the likeness for the statue from a photograph. Considerable controversy was aroused when these statues (and the three in the north aisle erected at the same time) were proposed. When the Vicar applied to the Diocese for the necessary permission (a 'faculty'), opponents led by Ernest Tanner considered it was 'superstitious reverence' and, amid allegations of idolatry and popery and following receipt of a petition of more than 600 parishioners objecting to the statues, the Chancellor of the Diocese held an enquiry to consider the matter. After hearing both sides, however, the faculty was granted and the statues were erected.

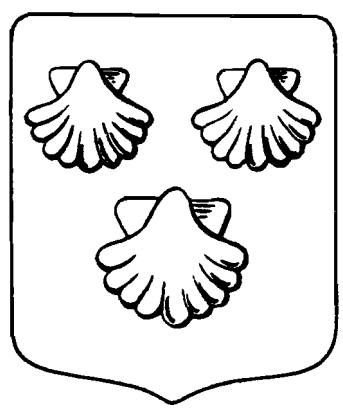
The new Chapel of Remembrance, a gift of The Friends, was dedicated on All Souls Day 1998. The altar and rail, decorated with representation of the saffron crocus, were designed by Dominic Delisle Burns, a member of The Friends of St. Mary's, and were crafted by Andrew Manning.

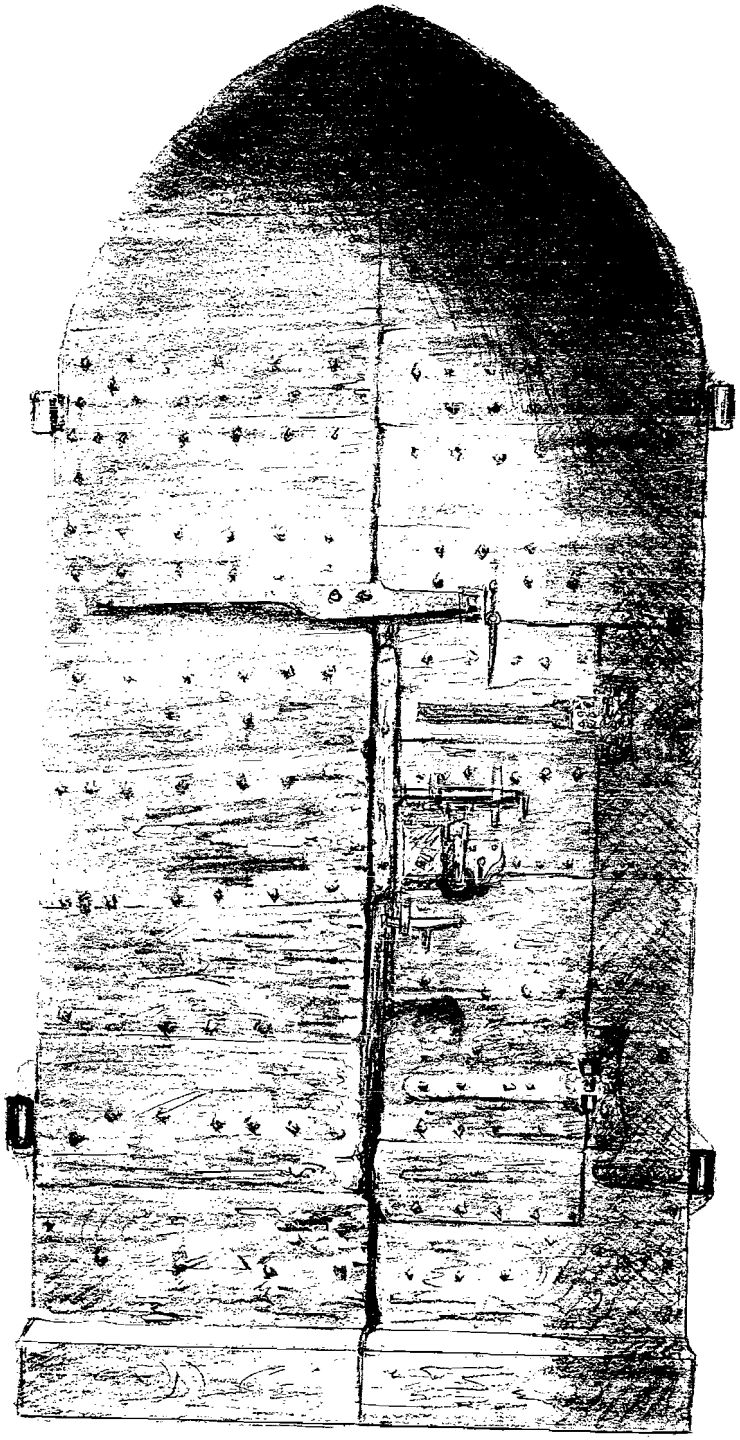
The most westerly stained glass window (Lavers & Barraud, 1860), representing the four evangelists, is dedicated in memory of the Rickard family. The next window (Ward & Hughes, 1870) shows Jesus in conversation with the Samaritan woman and Mary Magdalene confronted by the risen Christ. It is dedicated to the memory of John S. Harding. The third window (J. Powell & Sons, 1916) concentrates on the life of the Virgin Mary. It is in memory of Mary Parkinson Atkinson, wife of a local doctor and

JP. The last window is also by Laver & Barraud (1858) and is in memory of Martin Nockolds. It shows characters from the parables.

South Porch (choir vestry since the early 1960s)
The door dates back to the early 16th century and was called the 'marrying door' since it was in the south porch that the early parts of matrimony (and baptism) were performed. Those familiar with *The Prologue* to Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* will recall the Wife of Bath: 'husbands at church door she had five'. The, original, lock on the door represents the scallop shell of St. James, the design serving a double purpose in that it makes it easy for the key to locate the key-hole in the dark!

The (much restored) fan-vaulting of the ceiling is very reminiscent of Wastell's work in King's College Chapel but there is considerable doubt as to whether it was actually he who built it. It may well have been a later addition deliberately modelled after his style. On the inside wall near the door may be seen a fragment of an alabaster panel. Dated from around 1410 it probably formed part of the reredos to one of the many altars. Another piece of the panel is in the museum. The interesting story concerning 'our' piece is that it was discovered in the early 1900s in the garden wall of the Vicarage (now a doctor's surgery) by the north east wall of the churchyard.





SOUTH CHAPEL

At a vestry meeting on 19 October 1898 it was proposed that a screen should be erected *'across the arch which divides the south aisle of the nave from the south aisle of the chancel'* to commemorate the long reign of Queen Victoria. Some portions of ancient tracery were incorporated in the screen which was dedicated on 25 August 1901, some seven months after her death.

The south chapel possibly contained originally the altar where 'the Priest which singeth before the Trinity' ministered. It was, however, rebuilt by Lord Audley. In his will, dated 19 April 1544, he desires to be buried *'in the Tombe in my newe Chapell at Walden made for that purpose'*. The tomb, made of black Belgian slate (known as 'touch'), was considered appropriate by his contemporaries since it was "as black as his heart"! Although the chapel was rebuilt to Lord Audley's order, in fact his tomb was originally in the chancel, only being moved to the south chapel in the 1790s restoration.

Following that same restoration the chapel became known as the 'Braybrooke chapel' and was reserved for private prayer for the family until 1916 when Lord Braybrooke allowed the choir vestry to be removed to it. The east window of the chapel dates from the 1790s and shows the arms of Lord Braybrooke and his two wives (Anna Maria Schutz and Katherine Clayton), surmounted by a baron's coronet and supported by the Howard lions. On either side is the star of the Order of the Bath, Sir John Griffin Griffin having been installed as a Knight of this Order in 1761. The heraldic glass here and in the north aisle were supplied by James Pearson of Newport Street, Westminster at a cost of 130 guineas (£136.50).

On the east wall of the chapel are two memorial tablets the upper of which records the deaths of two sons of the 3rd Lord Braybrooke, killed within a week of each other in 1854 in the Crimean War. The lower records the deaths of the 7th Lord Braybrooke and *his* two sons, both killed in the 2nd World War.

THE CHANCEL

Clearly John Wastell decided not to tear down and rebuild the chancel he found in place. (He did the same thing at Great St. Mary's in Cambridge and at Lavenham, incidentally.)

The roof of the chancel is one of the features of the church with large round bosses, that over the altar showing a shield charged with a chalice and a wafer. There is a story, possibly apocryphal but dating back to a 1594 manuscript 'Description of Essex' by John Norden, that this interesting roof came from the chapel of St. Sepulchre in Sudbury. The fact that Vicar Hodgekyn (1542) had been Prior Provincial of the Dominicans with a rented house at Sudbury, lends credence to the story. Certainly it is ill-fitting with a gap between it and the chancel arch and with the centre line not meeting the centre of the arch, so the probability remains that it was brought in from elsewhere rather than being built on site.

The wall brackets 'supporting' the ceiling have mediaeval carvings of saints including, on the north side, St. John the Evangelist with a chalice, St. Bartholomew with a knife, St. Andrew with a cross and St. Peter with a book and a key. On the south side the saints include St. James the Less (or possibly St. Jude) with a fuller's hat or club, St. James the Greater with a staff and St. Simon with a fish.

The small modern shields below the clerestory are mainly ecclesiastical representing, on the north side, the Dioceses of Canterbury, Rochester and Chelmsford, and on the south side Walden Abbey, the Diocese of London and that of St. Albans. The remaining shields on the north side are for Thomas Howard, King Edward VI and the County of Essex, and on the south side Thomas Audley, Lord Braybrooke and the Town of Saffron Walden.

Before 1860 there was no east window in the church, only a small circular aperture filled with a painted glass representing the Holy Dove. The present window was installed in 1862. It is

dedicated to Eliza Taylor and is by Ward & Hughes. To either side are two more Ward & Hughes windows, both dated 1872 and dedicated to Eliza's daughter, Mary Kay Isabella Taylor.

The altar, of English oak, walnut and lime, showing emblems of the Passion, and the two large candlesticks were dedicated on 3rd October 1935 and are in memory of Lilian Mary Hughes, the wife of the then Vicar. The funds for this were raised by the Friends and the designs were by Sir Charles Nicholson who had been responsible for the rood screen erected some dozen or so years earlier. The carver of both rood screen and altar was E.W. Beckwith of Coggeshall. The altar was brought forward by the newly appointed Rector in 1996, to allow for celebration of the Eucharist from the 'eastward position'.

The Victorian reredos shows paintings of the four Evangelists with Jesus in the centre. To the right and left are Archangels. Like the window above, it is dedicated to Eliza Taylor and dated 1867.

A sedilia with a priest's seat, believed to have been built in the latter half of the 15th century and known to have existed until 1860, were re-discovered early in the 20th century on the south side of the chancel. They were badly mutilated and would have cost £400 to restore at that time so they were plastered over again.

Music has played an important part in the life of the church over the centuries. There is mention of an organ in the church as early as 1451 (see Appendix 5), and in the reign of Elizabeth I there were twelve 'singing boys'. Until 1984/5 the choir was comprised of male voices only but with a change of Choir Master at that time a mixed choir was formed which today (1999) numbers some 60 voices of which around 20 are boys and girls.

NORTH CHAPEL

It is believed that the north chapel was originally a side-chapel for the Guild of the Holy Trinity. Certainly John Leche, the Vicar from 1489-1521, and his sister Johane Bradbury, both founder members of the Guild, partly paid for the chapel. The altar tomb of John Leche stood in the chancel until the 1790 restoration when it was moved to its present position . The inscription round the top is in Latin and may be rendered as follows:

Dust claims him, stone-locked here. More famed than he
Of Saint nor is, nor was, nor e'er shall be.
Leche was he hight - the Law of God he loved
Eke with this House his care was well approved
With many a gift the sacred shrine he filled
Prompt to design and sedulous to build.
Kind to the poor he cheered the sad with food,
Shared by the wight, who write these verses rude.
So dower high Heaven his spirit - best of boons,
Thus from thy heart, bystander, pray eftsoons
In God is my Hope.

High up on the walls are mediaeval carvings of saints, probably dating back to the 15th century. Did they, perhaps, originally form part of the imported chancel roof? Among the carvings on the north side are John the Baptist, St. Jude (carrying a boat) and St. Paul, while on the south side St. Matthias, with an axe, may be seen.

The east window, by Burlison & Grylls, was dedicated by the Bishop of Barking on 27th July 1904. The theme of the window is the Worship of the Incarnation and full details are given in Appendix 4. At the bottom of the window are the Braybrooke arms and the Braybrooke family, robed and wearing their coronets. The two north windows, with representations of the saffron flower and the scallop shell of St. James at the top of the lower lights, were also dedicated in 1904.

The painting above the altar was given by Lord Braybrooke in 1793 and served as the reredos to the high altar until 1860. It is a copy by Matthew William Peters (1742-1814) of a painting by Corregio (1494-1534), the original of which is in a gallery in Parma. It represents the Madonna and Child with Mary Magdalene and St. Jerome. The latter was a scholar who lived between 341 and 420. He travelled widely in Gaul, Dalmatia and Italy and learned Hebrew in order that he might study the Bible in its original language. He had already learned Greek. In Rome he embarked on producing a Latin text of the Bible in what has become known as the Vulgate version. In the painting he is showing the completed Bible to the Holy Child. Often, as in this picture, he is shown accompanied by a lion, the story being that he had once removed a thorn from a lion's paw.

St. Jerome was one of the four Latin doctors - St. Ambrose, St. Gregory and St. Augustine were the others - whose teaching was regarded as the basis for mediaeval theology.

This painting, for which Correggio was reputedly paid four hundred imperial pounds, two cartloads of faggots, a few bushels of wheat and a pig (!), is one of a pair showing the same subject in this case by day and in the other by night in which the only light comes from the Holy Child. The original of this last is now in a gallery in Dresden.

The green kneelers, like the red ones gradually appearing in the nave, are the work of a dedicated band of embroiderers among the congregation. Many have been donated in memory of loved ones, the cost of the remainder being defrayed by the Friends of the church.

NORTH AISLE

The tablet under the window at the west end of the north aisle refers to the cross on the roof outside. On the west wall can be seen two embryo 'doorways' of which no evidence appears on the outside. The columns and capitals are similar to those associated with shops and, as we have seen (page 12) sales of goods did take place in the church, as well as in the market just outside.

On the north wall at the west end are two Elizabethan memorials, probably still in their original position. The larger is for Sir William Byrde, a member of the Guild of the Holy Trinity and one of whose forebears, Thomas Byrde, helped found alms houses here in 1400 through a charter granted by King Henry IV. To the left below the memorials is the side of an altar tomb bearing the arms of the Woodhall family.

In the window above the door to the north porch (formerly used for funerals and now the clergy vestry) are the Achievements of the Braybrooke family erected in 1792. The arms of the Braybrookes are shown impaling Clayton (Sir John Griffin Griffin's second wife). This window formed the east window in the north chapel until 1904 when it was removed to its present position. Opposite the door to the north porch, in the spandrels of the arch, is a representation of the Bourchier knot.

Halfway down the north wall is a memorial to John Minott, one of the many people who left this area for the New World to avoid persecution. He is credited with having founded the settlement of Dorchester, now a district of Boston, Massachusetts.

The carved figures placed high up at the east end of the north aisle were erected in the 1920s. They represent St. Nicholas, whose chapel was probably just below, John Leche, the vicar at the time of the re-building of the church, and his sister Johane Bradbury.

The brasses, windows and carvings are described in Appendices 1,2 and 3.

THE EXTERIOR

The north side.
The clerestory of the nave has an embattled parapet and a moulded cornice with bosses carved with various designs including the Tudor rose, the de Vere mollet (star), the Bourchier knot and the Catherine wheel. A representation of a traditional 'wild man' can be seen both here and on the south side. The north side carvings can just be seen from the ground through the 'battlements' of the parapet of the north aisle/chapel.

A moulded string course runs just below that parapet and is covered with strange creatures including a cat, a swan, a monkey, a goat, a lion, a rabbit and other beasts in addition to the more normal angels and gargoyles etc. The three windows of the eastern end of the north aisle have alternate squares of flint and stone between them, the external evidence of the mediaeval church still remaining.

Beside the door to the north porch is a small statue of St. Cedd who came from the north to bring Christianity to the East Saxons. His statue is placed on the north side of the church so that he may be looking northwards towards his home! In the bay next to the east from the north porch two small heads can be seen. Were these perhaps self-portraits of the stonemasons?!

The Verger's Cottage, which was restored by the church in 1992, is almost certainly one of the earliest domestic buildings in Saffron Walden and was built in the 1450s. Some of the cut stone foundations - some faces of the stones being coloured - are made of material from the Gothic church when it was demolished to build the present church. The Essex County Council Inspector of Historic Buildings at the time of the restoration said that he knew of only one other similar cottage (in Malden) with its proximity to the church and the Priest's room on the upper floor. Originally this room would have had an external staircase, over the downstairs doorway. Incised original lettering can be seen on the wooden lintel. The steep roof at the west end is sometimes

called a 'cat slide roof' for obvious reasons! The cottage is now occupied by the Organist/Choirmaster.

The Parish Room building is Victorian with modern extensions.

The east end.
The eastern end of the nave has two stone cupolas similar to those on the roof of King's College chapel in Cambridge.

Incised in the outer wall of the north chapel is a matrix of a brass inscription dated AD 1526 on a stone, probably the date on which the chapel was dedicated. Above the window on the outside of the north chapel the arms of Neville and Maude are carved in honour of Lady Florence Braybrooke who was responsible for much of the restoration work in the north chapel in 1904.

Below the east window of the chancel is the blocked up entrance to the Howard vault. Originally this vault was entered by steps from the chancel but in the 1790 restoration the entrance was moved to the outside. The vault contains the coffins of ten Earls of Suffolk and those of Lord Howard de Walden and his two wives. The vault was permanently sealed in 1860.

The south side.
The small statue halfway up the wall by the south chapel door is of St. Alban, the first British Christian martyr. The church was in the diocese of St. Albans until 1914 when it was placed in the newly created diocese of Chelmsford.

Under the left-hand window on the east side of the south porch near the ground, a stone is inset bearing the design of a Norman cross. Originally, together with a further piece discovered in part of a nearby house, The Close in the High Street, when that part was dismantled and removed to West Grinstead in 1934, this stone formed part of the vertical shaft of what may well have been a market cross. The market was held on Bury Hill in Norman times.

Partly under the south porch and partly under the church itself on the south side is a vaulted crypt entered by external stairs (only accessible by application to the Rector). This was used as a charnel house until 1860. Before the 18th century coffined burials were exceptional and few graves were marked with a permanent memorial. The digging of new graves, therefore, inevitably disturbed human remains. The larger bones were taken to the charnel house and stored. When a heating apparatus for the church was installed in the latter half of the 19th century, the bones were reinterred in the churchyard.

The churchyard.
The churchyard was closed to fresh burials in 1857. Before Lord (Rab) Butler died in 1982, however, he arranged for a special Order in Council to be passed to permit him to be buried in the churchyard and his grave may be found in the north east corner outside the north chapel. The other gravestones, with one or two exceptions, were removed and placed round the edge of the churchyard in the 1950s.

The west end.
Just beside the southern window (the 'medallion window') there is a small niche which formerly held a statue of St. Gregory with the traditional dove on his shoulder. The legend is that the dove whispered the Gregorian chants to him!

One of the pinnacles from the spire, replaced after the spire had been struck by lightning, rests on the grass outside the south window. Many parties of schoolchildren visit the church each year with question papers about the building and its purpose. A question in one such paper read: 'what has expired outside the west end?' ('ex-spire'd!).

Appendices

APPENDIX 1

THE BRASSES IN THE NORTH AISLE

Most of the brasses in the church were lost in the 1790 restoration. These few that remain were taken to Audley End at that time as souvenirs and were returned to the church by Lord Braybrooke in 1901.

Their descriptions, starting at the left hand end, are as follows.

1. A Priest. 1430. Originally from a stone in the south chapel. It is believed that the brass represents John Byrd, Vicar of Mundon, near Maldon, who died about 1394. The figure is portrayed in Eucharistic vestments - amice, alb, chasuble, stole and maniple with the ornamentiation throughout consisting of a simple quatrefoil design. The features, poise of the figure and the disposal of the vestments are unusually well represented. Above the head of the figure there was formerly a representation of a 'pelican in her piety' surmounted by a scroll bearing the words *'sic Christus dilexit nos'* ('thus Christ loved us'). Lord Braybrooke, writing in 1836, said that it had recently disappeared but a tracing by a former vicar, Nicholas Bull (1810-1844), was fortunately preserved. A new brass made from it was placed on the wall above it in 1901.

2. A civilian. 1530. The original stone is near the north porch. The man is shown bare-headed. Over his jacket he wears a doublet, with loose sleeves but tight wrist bands, and a long civilian's gown abundantly fur-lined and trimmed with long false-sleeves. On his feet are very broad shoes. In the bend of his right arm he supports a large, thick, double-clasped book, perhaps indicating that he was a lawyer.

3. A Lady. Date about 1530. The wife of number 4. Note the tam o' shanter type hat and her gauntlets.

4. A civilian, husband to number 3. The slab from which both these figures have been torn bears a matrix for a second wife but that brass has not survived. The man is shown full faced and clean shaven, attired in the long loose gown of the period, reaching to the ground, open down the front and slightly turned back at the edges, showing the fur trimming. It has long pendant sleeves, reaching nearly to the ankles, with fur-trimmed holes at the side for the arms. The back collar is also fur-trimmed. The feet of this effigy have been broken off at some time.

5. A civilian and his wife. Date about 1510. The man wears a long fur-trimmed loose gown with enormous broad round-toed shoes. His head is bare with long hair and he wears a waist girdle. The lady also has a waist girdle with a long pendant-ornamented end and a coverchief on her head.

6 and 7. Two ladies. Date about 1480. Each wears a butterfly head-dress and a plain tight-fitting low-necked gown, fur-trimmed at the neck, with a narrow plain girdle over the hips and tight-fitting sleeves with large cuffs which are turned forward. There can be very little doubt that the figures belong to the same composition. It was usual when a man had four wives to represent him in the centre with the first two wives in the first and second place, each with a half turn to the left towards him, as here. The other two wives would have been placed in third and fourth place each with a half turn to the right towards him. (When a man had three wives, his first wife came first, with him second and the other two wives following. With two wives, one came either side.)

8. A Lady. Date about 1495. This may well have belonged to the same composition as the previous two brasses in which case it would represent a third (or fourth) wife to the man for whom the brass was laid down. Note that the cuffs in all three figures are drawn forward in the same manner. The costume is, of course, of a style later than that of the other two but it was not uncommon for the later wife to be so portrayed.

APPENDIX 2

STAINED GLASS WINDOWS IN THE NORTH WALL

The **left hand window** was made by Messrs. J. Powell and Sons of Whitefriars and was dedicated, in December 1912, in memory of Mary Maria Tuke and the central tracery lights beneath the transom are fitted with a scroll inscribed with the motto of the Girls' Friendly Society because of the interest shown by Miss Tuke in that organisation. The window shows four East Anglian Saints and their symbols and heraldry. First is St. Alban, the first English Christian martyr. Alban served in the Roman army and helped a Christian clergyman to escape persecution. Charged with helping the escape, he professed his faith and was tortured and beheaded. He is shown here in civilian dress and in his left hand is a sword, the instrument of his martyrdom. Next is St. Helena, mother of Constantine the Great. She believed she had discovered the true cross on a pilgrimage she made to the Holy Land - at age 80! She is shown supporting a large cross in recognition of that belief. The third glass in the left hand window shows St. Etheldreda who was married to an East Anglian Prince. She was widowed and retired to Ely where she founded a monastery, now long since gone except for one stone still in the present Cathedral, a model of which she is shown as holding. Finally in this window we see St. Edmund. He was King of East Anglia until defeated by the Danes by whom he was tied to a tree and shot with arrows. He is represented in civilian dress but wearing a crown and a sword and holding three arrows.

Beneath the saints are the coats of arms of, respectively, St. Alban's Abbey, the Borough of Colchester, the See of Ely and St. Edmund's Abbey. In the lights above the saints four virgin martyrs are represented. These are St. Lucy, St. Agatha, St. Agnes and St. Cecilia. The topmost lights bear shields showing a pelican in her piety (emblem of the Redeemer) and a phoenix (emblem of the Resurrection).

The centre window is also by Powells of Whitefriars (1908). It is known as the 'medical window' and is dedicated to the memory of a young doctor, Harold William Atkinson. The main picture shows Jesus healing sickness. Our Saviour in a rich robe is laying His hand on a child and nearby are two Pharisees eyeing Him narrowly. To the right are two Apostles and a man on his knees imploring aid. In front of Jesus is a tall lad carried by his mother and father and in the left hand light little children are brought to be cured. Below the main picture are figures of four Christian virtues: Temperance, Prudence, Justice and Fortitude. Between these figures are shields bearing sketches of drugs used in pharmacy: Yellow Gentian, Aconite, Foxglove, Saffron, Cinchona, Poppy, Deadly Nightshade and Eucalyptus.

In the upper part of the main lights are figures of Old and New Testament saints, suggestive of healing body and soul: Moses raising the brazen serpent to heal the people, Elijah with the raven bringing food to preserve his life, Elisha bidding Naaman 'wash and be clean', Isaiah with a dish of figs for the poultice to relieve Hezekiah's boil and a scroll 'Behold I will heal you', St. John with a cup out of which the poison in the form of an evil spirit is being driven, St. Luke with a medical book, St. Peter with the keys of the kingdom, and St. Paul, who pronounced God's pardon on the penitent Corinthians, with a long sword. Above the transom are six shields bearing the arms of the institutions with which Dr. Atkinson was connected including King Edward VI Grammar School in Saffron Walden, Caius College Cambridge, St. Bartholomew's Hospital in London, the College of Physicians and the College of Surgeons.

The last (most easterly) window (J. Powell and Sons 1888) is in memory of John Thomas Frye who became organist here, after an open audition, at the age of 8. He held the post for 64 years. The window shows the four temple musicians named in Chronicles (1 Chron. XV and 2 Chron.V): Chenaniah, Heman, Jeduthun and Asaph. The window was presented by John Frye's relatives and friends.

APPENDIX 3

NORTH WALL CARVINGS

The stone carvings under the stained glass windows on the north wall date back to the mediaeval church. They were probably canopies for the reredoses for the side altars. Regrettably, over the centuries, they have gradually deteriorated but certain of the figures can still be discerned. A full description and some good photographs are included in an article by the Rev. Montague Benton in *Transactions of the Essex Archaeological Society* Vol. XIII (new series) of 1915.

At the back of the left-hand (western) bay in the centre is the small figure of an angel. A rose encircled by branches (in one case a rose alone) separates the canopies while the spaces ('spandrels') are filled with a design which may be described as two ragged staves in the form of a St. Andrew's Cross surmounted by a rose.

Over each recess in the middle bay there are double carved mouldings ('ogee hoods') with pinnacles between them. The hoods are arranged in pairs, one over each recess, and at the base of the pinnacle shafts small angels may be seen. An ornamentation of a ragged staff appears in each of the spandrels which also have a series of shields, alternating in pairs with pairs of inverted fleur-de-lys suspended from horizontal mouldings. The designs of the shields represent the instruments of the Passion with the first, sixth and ninth each showing a large nail from which hangs a crown of thorns. The second shield shows a lantern, the third depicts a 'vessel full of vinegar', the fourth shows four dice with a sword crossed with an axe, the seventh a scourge crossed with a spear and the eighth a reed and sponge crossed with a spear.

The right-hand (eastern) bay is more easy to decipher. From left to right we can see first the carving of an eagle (traditionally the sign of John the Evangelist - hence its common use in lecterns). The eagle holds a scroll in its beak and would probably originally

have been painted with the opening words of St. John's Gospel *'in principio erat verbum'* ('in the beginning was the word'). The second carving is of King David playing his harp.

The third carving shows Our Lord appearing to Mary Magdalene in the Garden. His right arm, which is broken off, was probably originally shown as repelling Mary *'nole me tangere'* ('touch me not'). His left hand holds a 'resurrection banner' - a cross with a narrow flag attached. Mary kneels on His right side with her right hand raised to her long hair. Her left hand holds the lid of an ointment box (her traditional emblem - see John 12:3).

The fourth carving is of John the Baptist, shown in half profile. His sleeveless garment, reaching almost to his bare feet, is presumably his 'raiment of camel's hair' (Matt. 3:4) with its leather girdle. In front of him, and looking back at him, is the Forerunner (Heb. 6:20) and in front of the Forerunner would originally have been the Agnus Dei, the symbol associated with the Baptist, but only a portion of the cross remains.

The fifth carving is badly mutilated. The principal figure, which has been destroyed, was probably of Our Lady since the one remaining is of the Blessed Child in a long loose dress. He is holding a bird by its beak which probably relates to the apocryphal 'miracle of the clay birds'. In this story Jesus made twelve clay sparrows on the Sabbath. An onlooker told Joseph who reproved his son for breaking the Sabbath, whereupon Jesus clapped His hands and the birds flew away.

The sixth carving is also much mutilated and decayed. Doubting Thomas is in the act of thrusting his hand into Jesus' side. Our Lord is shown naked to the waist and Thomas kneels at His right.

The seventh carving is complicated and much decayed. It is believed to show the Agony in the Garden with two groups of figures of which Our Lord, with a halo round His head and wearing a long cloak, forms part of the right hand group. Behind Him a fig tree represents the trees in the garden.

APPENDIX 4

THE NORTH CHAPEL EAST WINDOW

This window, together with the two windows on the north wall, was dedicated by the Bishop of Barking on 27th July 1904. The makers were Burlison & Grylls. There are three principal lights and two subsidiary lights on each side and the theme of the whole is the Worship of the Incarnation.

In the centre light are the Mother and Child with, beneath them, the words *'Venite adoremus, Dominum'* (O come let us worship the Lord). In the tracery above are angels with scrolls bearing the Latin words of the Gloria in Excelsis, taking up the words of the song they sang when they first announced the Incarnation to the shepherds at Bethlehem. Over all are shed the rays of divine grace. Our Saviour is seen blessing all His worshippers and the Virgin wears a robe of blue, the colour of the sky, denoting purity.

In the adjoining light to the left are the shepherds, one of whom holds a lamb and another a crook, and behind them may be seen the fields of Bethlehem. Above them is an angel with a scroll. In the light to the right of the centre panel the Wise Men, bearing their gifts, are represented. The treasures are in caskets which they are offering to the Christ, with one holding a flag upon which is the sun, signifying that the sun-worshippers of the east have come to pay worship to Him to whom alone worship is due. Notice the African with swarthy face whom tradition includes among the Wise Men. In the background are camels and a servant with more camels.

Foremost, in the two outer lights to the left, stands St. John the Baptist holding a wand topped with a cross. The remaining figures represent the Prophets of the Old Testament who foreshadowed the Incarnation. On St. John the Baptist's left is Daniel with a royal fillet around his brows. Behind them stands Isaiah with a book

and, in the outer light, Jeremiah with a scroll and David playing a harp.

The outer lights to the right show the New Testament witnesses of the Incarnation: St. Peter leading the 'glorious company of the Apostles', St. Paul with a sword, St. James the Great with his pilgrim's staff and wallet (note also the scallop shell in his hat) and, last of all, St, John holding a cup commemorating the legend which tells of poison being rendered innocuous to him. Traditionally St. John is shown clean-shaven because he was the youngest of the disciples.

At the bottom of the window the then Braybrooke family, responsible for the refurbishment of the chapel at that time, robed and wearing their coronets, are shown together with their Arms.

APPENDIX 5

THE ORGAN

There was apparently an organ in St. Mary's as early as 1451, built by John Hudene. The churchwardens' accounts for the period contain many references to it such as *'paid to Jno. Tracey of Thaxted for trying* (ie tuning) *the organ 16d'*, and *'to Friar John Taylor for playing on the organs at the feast of the relics 12d'*. As part of the rebuilding there is reference to a Thos. Holden who gave *'the new organs'*. And the 1552 inventories mention that *'certen organ pypes* [were] *sold for 3s 4d'*.

The present organ, however, can be traced back to 1824 (Lord Braybrooke's History places the date at 1819) when a finger organ, built by John Vincent at a cost of £800 and erected over the gallery at the west end of the nave *'where the choir sat'*, was 'opened' on 24th January 1824. The specification of 'the Great Organ' included 14 stops and that of 'the Swell Organ' a further 5 with about 15 large pedal pipes. The Gothic main case and a small proportion of the pipework from this organ still survive in the present instrument, but all have been significantly altered since that time. It is also possible that the main Great slider soundboard may have been rebuilt from that provided by Vincent but, again, it is not readily recognisable as such.

This instrument was removed in the 1850s to a position near the north porch and, as part of the 1860 restorations it was moved again to the north chapel.

Between 1885 and 1889 a new organ was erected by Lewis & Co of Brixton in the south chapel at a cost of £1147. The Great and Choir Organs were practically the same as before, the Swell and Pedal being new and survive as part of the present organ, and a new front, designed by J. F. Bentley, was provided, Vincent's front becoming the back. The console was in the chancel on the south side.

In March 1912 a new instrument by Norman & Beard of Norwich was dedicated; the cost was £1269. This included a new tubular-pneumatic action. The console was moved to the north chapel and Vincent's front was restored to its old position. In 1952 further repairs were undertaken and the console was moved to its present position on top of the Rood Screen.

In 1971 there was a further extensive rebuild by Hill, Norman and Beard when the horizontal Trompeta Réal, situated above the screen in the south chapel, was added. This trumpet *en chamade* is one of the very few in this country to continue down to the Pedal Organ at 16-foot pitch, providing a solid foundation for the full organ.

The most recent major overhaul, by David Wells of Liverpool, took place in 1996/97 and was designed to refurbish those parts of the mechanism which were showing their age. The reservoirs, key actions and pedal chests were restored or renewed and the existing pneumatic pedal actions were electrified. A new transmission was installed together with new drawstop slider solenoids, new piston action and new console drawstop solenoids; the Orchestral oboe was replaced. A fourth keyboard was added at this time and the organ was retuned to 'concert pitch' to enable the organ to accompany other instruments. Both these last items were privately funded and formed no part in the overall cost of some £70,000 raised by means of an appeal.

The present instrument, therefore, now has four manuals with five keyboard divisions (Solo, Swell, Great, Bombarde and Choir, which is in fact a Positive). There are more than 3500 pipes in the organ. A full specification is displayed on the organ case in the south chapel.

APPENDIX 6

SOME VISITORS' QUESTIONS ANSWERED!

Why is the altar in churches at the east end? To remind us that Christ is the Dayspring and Sun of Righteousness (the sun rising in the east each morning). Christians are usually buried with their feet to the east to signify that they died in the hope of resurrection.

Why is the lectern an eagle? The eagle is a symbol of St. John the Evangelist and represents the spreading of the Good News to the world.

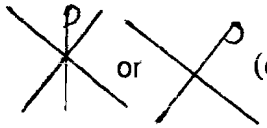
Why is the weathervane a cock? By a Papal enactment in the middle of the 9th century, the figure of a cock was set up on every church steeple as the emblem of St. Peter. This is an allusion to his denial of Our Lord thrice before the cock crew twice (Mark xiv.30).

What do the letters 'INRI' above the Cross on the rood screen stand for? Pontius Pilate decreed (John xix.19) that the words 'Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews' should be put up above the Cross in Greek, Latin and Hebrew. The Latin version of the phrase reads 'Iesus Nazarenus, Rex Iudaeorum'. (In Latin 'I' before a vowel at the start of a word is pronounced as a 'J'.)

What do the letters 'IHS' on the pulpit fall stand for? It is usually taken to represent the first three letters of the name 'Jesus' in Greek (ΙΗΣους). Other meanings are also given: *Iesus Hominum Salvator* ('Jesus, the Saviour of Men); *In Hac Salus* ('In this [ie the Cross] safety'); *In Hoc Signo* ('In this sign [ye shall conquer]')

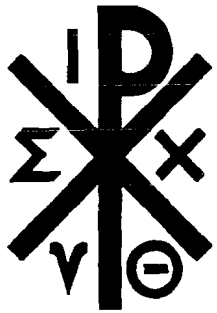
What are the symbols on the modern green altar frontal? They are the first and last letters of the Greek alpahabet, alpha and omega, meaning that God is the beginning and

the end. (Their representation here as Aω is strictly incorrect since A is the capital alpha and ω is the lower case omega. Properly it should either be AΩ or αω.)

 or (or variations on that theme) stand for Christ;

chi (X) and rho (ρ) are the first two letters of Χριστος (Christos).

Why is the fish used as a Christian symbol? The letters of the Greek word for fish, Ιχθυς (Ichthus), formed an acronym of the initial letters of the words 'Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour'.



APPENDIX 7

THE GUILD OF THE HOLY TRINITY

At the end of the 15th century the town and its market were in a bad way, partly caused by the zeal of King Henry VII in reviving old feudal dues which had been allowed to lapse. In 1513 the vicar, John Leche, and his sister Dame Bradbury, together with some others, petitioned the King and offered sums of money for the redemption of the dues. In the absence of any form of town council, however, this proved to be illegal and another way had to be found. Accordingly a religious 'Guild of the Holy Trinity' was founded, attached to the Parish Church, and endowed with lands etc.

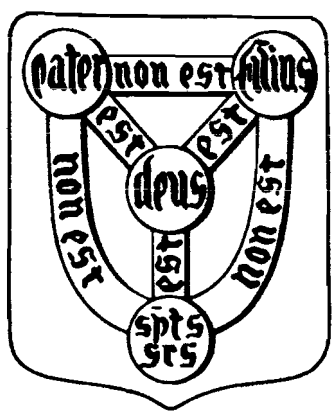
The Guild undertook to discharge all tolls and pay all dues in one sum to the King. The Guild received two Charters from Henry VIII in 1514 and by them the Guild was granted *'all the market (with the Court of Pie Powder) holden in Walden on the Sunday weekly, and the fines, tolls etc., connected therewith; the windmill, the maltmill, together with the office of Clerk to the Market ...'.* The Guild also had a licence for a yearly fair on the Common.

The Guild had to provide for a priest to pray for the Guild's trustees together with Katherine Semar, who had willed property to the Guild, and the King and Queen. In 1517 John Leche gave the Guild lands which he owned in Newport and Widdington to provide for a second priest to say Mass for the benefactors of the Guild, including himself and his sister. In 1522, after John Leche's death, Dame Bradbury obtained another Charter from Henry permitting the second priest to be freed from some of his duties so that he could act as a schoolmaster to teach grammar. He lived in a dwelling called Trinity College in Castle Street *'against a little layne leyding from saide streate into the church yarde'.* This act on Jane Bradbury's part represented the first step towards a formal education service in Walden.

The Guild also controlled the Almshouses and played a very important role in town life. It obtained the room (sometimes called the 'parvis' but more usually nowadays referred to as 'the muniments room' because various town records are held there) over the south porch for its meetings.

Up until the beginning of the 20th century the election of the Mayor took place in the muniments room on August 24th (St. Bartholomew's Day) and the wooden lamb bearing a cross, which is now in the museum, was placed on the table when the Mayor was chosen. The lamb was said to symbolise the peace which should prevail amongst members of the Corporation and the cross as a reminder that they should share one another's burdens. Nowadays after the Mayor-making service in the church each May, the door leading to the room is left open for formal inspection by the Council.

The Guild played a large part in obtaining the finance for the building of the present church and the nave bosses all show devices associated with leading members of the Guild.



APPENDIX 8

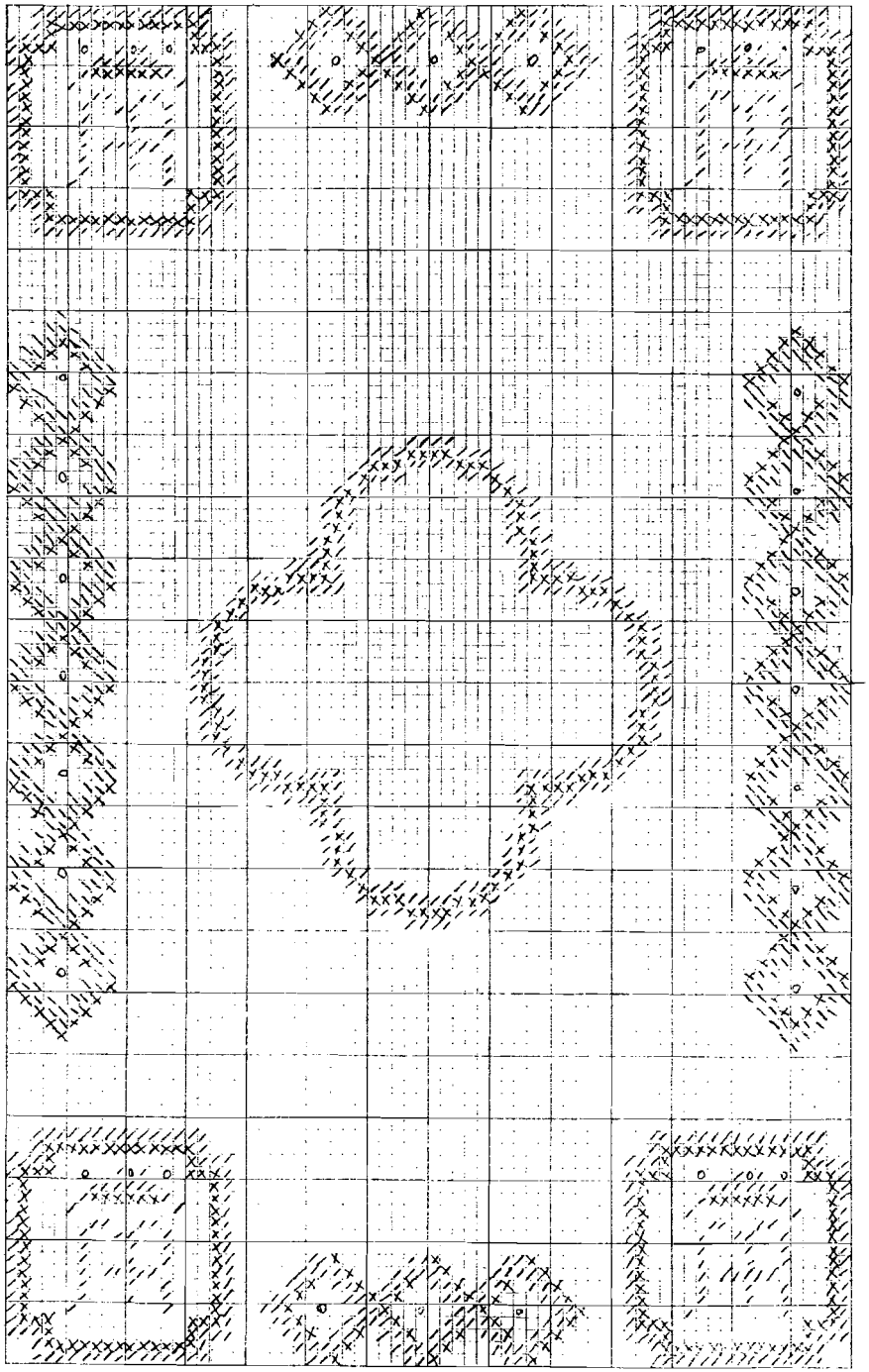
THE FRIENDS OF SAFFRON WALDEN PARISH CHURCH

The Society was formed in 1933 'to bring together a body of people from near and far who care for this magnificent church'. The aim was to raise funds for its maintenance but also, and in particular, its adornment and improvement.

Thus, although The Friends have contributed to the repair of the spire in the 1970s and the recovering of the south aisle roof in 1999/2000 and sundry other 'repairs' over the years, their main rôle has been to provide funds for those improvements which could not otherwise have been afforded because of more pressing demands on the financial resources of the church.

Most notable of the projects funded by The Friends have been the building of the inner porch at the west end, the repainting of the nave ceiling during the 1970 restoration project, provision of a 'voice reinforcement system', new lighting, new carpeting of the north chapel, the chancel and the sanctuary, the bookstall outside the clergy vestry and, most recently, the new Chapel of Remembrance at the east end of the south aisle and the board at the west end showing the names of the incumbents of the living over the centuries.

The Friends have also largely funded the new kneelers, embroidered by members of the congregation and gradually making their presence felt throughout the nave. The north chapel kneelers were a previous project of the Sewing Circle also supported financially by The Friends.



APPENDIX 9

THE KNEELERS

In 1984 the Rector, the Reverend Peter Harlow, suggested that new kneelers should be provided for the North Chapel to complement the new carpet and chairs which the Friends of the Church were financing. The Friends agreed to pay for the kneelers as well. The original designs were by Diana Rolf. There are eight different but complementary 'borders' on the tops and sides of the kneelers , a central quatrefoil and Maria Regina motifs in each corner.

The kneelers are worked on double canvas, ten to the inch. Most of the stitches used are from the cross-stitch range and the wool used is Appleton crewel in varying numbers of strands.

The North Chapel project was finished by 1988 and in 1990 a new and on-going project was started to provide kneelers for the central nave, this time in red to give 'warmth' to the church. Although the Friends of the Church agreed to pay for these kneelers also, to help the financing of the project parishioners are encouraged to pay for individual kneelers in memory of family, friends or significant events in their own lives.

The basic design of the kneelers in the nave is the same as for the North Chapel but the more experienced embroiderers have created their own designs within the central quatrefoil. Most relate to the town or the church but a few depict the interests of those to whom the kneeler is dedicated. On the underside of each kneeler is a description of the design and the stitches used, and the identity of the embroiderer.

The designs for the cushions for the two Bishop's Chairs show an elaborate MR device, taking letters from a 15th century manuscript, in damask stitches and petit point. (Damask stitches were used by nuns as early as the 12th century to embroider wall-hangings.) New kneelers for the High Altar are being created to mark the beginning of the third Millennium.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

St. Mary's Church Records
Town Library, Saffron Walden
Essex Record Office
The Heraldry Society

W Addison	*Audley End*
M Aston	*England Iconoclasts*
S R Bassett	*Saffron Walden to AD 1300*
G M Benton	*History of Saffron Walden Church*
The Clarke Papers	*edited by C H Frith*
A Clifton-Taylor	*Six more English Towns*
E Duffy	*The Stripping of the Altars*
W J Fancett	*The Story of Saffron Walden Church*
J Harvey	*English Mediaeval Architects*
C Hawkins	*Discovering Church Furniture*
C B Rowntree	*Saffron Walden then and now*
H C Stacey	*Scrapbooks*
Rev. C H White	*The Journals of W Dowsing*
M White	*Saffron Walden's History*

Information about the windows in the church has been given by Mrs. Muriel Simpson in her pamphlet on the subject.

The Flying Serpent
or
Strange News out of Essex

being a true Relation of a Monstrous Serpent ..... Also a Discourse of other Serpents and particularly of a Cockatrice killed at Saffron Walden.

One of these most venemous Serpents in former time lurked about the Meads near *Saffron Walden* in *Essex*, who by her very sight, killed so many as the Town became almost depopulated, when a valorous Knight making him a Coat of Christal Glass, boldly went to assail this *Cockatrice*, but her venemous Nature not able to indure the purity of that fine mettle, she suddenly dyed, in memory whereof his Sword was hung in *Walden* Church, the effigies of the *Cockatrice* set up in brass, and a Table hanged close by, wherein was continued all the story of the adventure; but in these late times of Rebellion, it being taken for a Monument of Superstition was by the lawless Souldiers broken in pieces, to show they were also of a venemous Nature as well as the *Cockatrice.*

(1669)

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