



**CHURCHES VISITED AND REVISITED
(17/12/16 TO DATE) – BOOK 5**



Continuing with St Thomas of Canterbury church in Brentwood



It was a good look around and photograph session for me, as I tried to select my best shots when I got home. Sadly a few errors did occur, one step of Jesus's last walk was missing, and some shots were not the best, but the photos do give a good image of the station boards on view, which were part of the church. I believe the light glare through the window, affected some of the photos. Having bid my farewell to the church people, I was pointed in the direction of the Catholic Cathedral.

Whilst writing this article in 2013, I have now come to realise that I had been totally misguided that this impressive building was not in fact a Cathedral at all (but just a church), but it was still a very fine building, but it had the name of St Thomas of Canterbury Church. The history of this can be summarised by the following words - Brentwood began as a clearing made in the woods by burning trees (hence 'burnt wood' which became Brentwood) to provide a stop-off point about one day's journeying from the Thames for pilgrims *en route* from East Anglia to the shrine of Thomas Becket at Canterbury. The first church building dedicated to St Thomas in Brentwood was a chapel built around 1221 to serve these pilgrims.

The ruins of the original chapel are still to be seen in the High Street. Brentwood remained part of the Parish of South Weald until 1873, but in 1835 a new church was built on the site of the present church to cater for the growing population in Brentwood. The new building had a short and unhappy history, being poorly designed and structurally unsound. Not long after Brentwood became an independent parish, the church was demolished to make way for the third St Thomas's in Brentwood. On 14th February 1881 the local MP, Octavius Coope (a member of the brewing family), laid the foundation-stone in the west wall of the present church. Two years later the main part of the church had been completed, and it was consecrated on 26th April 1883 by the Bishop of St Alban's (in whose diocese Brentwood then was). A total of seven services were held between 5.00am and 9.00pm that day.

The present church is Victorian Gothic in the early English style, and it was designed by Mr EC Lee, also responsible for the design of St Paul's Bentley, a nearby parish. A generous gift from the Revd Charles Belli, a former vicar of South Weald, made it possible to rebuild the chancel, and the following five years saw further collections and gifts towards the building fund. The tower was completed in 1887 and dedicated by the Bishop on 19th October. The following year saw the installation of a peal of bells, and the old organ was replaced in 1897. A beautiful reredos depicting the crucifixion was bequeathed by George Larkin in 1896. Originally uncoloured, colour was added during as a memorial to those who died in the second world war during the redecoration of the chancel by Laurence King in the late 1950's. The church centre was added in 1988, to replace the old church hall which was located on Queens Road near the present vicarage. The centre contains the foyer where refreshments are served during the day, a hall, kitchen, sacristy, choir vestry, office and meeting rooms.



Catholic Cathedral, Brentwood



And so I headed into the next road to find the Catholic Cathedral, this was to be a very modern building, from where a few booklets were bought, but I felt it lacked a little bit of the character that you felt when you were in St Thomas of Canterbury.

Brentwood Cathedral began in 1861 as a parish church built in a gothic style. This relatively small building was raised to Cathedral status in 1917. Between 1989 and 1991 the church was enlarged in an Italianate Classical style by Quinlan Terry. The original church building on the south (liturgical east) side was retained

The new Brentwood Cathedral was dedicated by Cardinal Basil Hume on 31 May 1991. The donors chose to remain anonymous and the money was given solely for this purpose.

The Cathedral

Architecturally, Quinlan Terry took his inspiration from the early Italian Renaissance crossed with the English Baroque of Christopher Wren. This, it was felt, would be appropriate for the town and its conservation area, but above all it would provide the right space and light for the liturgy to be celebrated. The cathedral was designed along a square plan, focused on the high altar, placed in the nave to accommodate the changes in liturgical fashion after the Second Vatican Council.

Work began in 1989 and was completed two years later. The north elevation consists of nine bays each divided by Doric pilasters. This is broken by a huge half-circular portico, which was inspired by a similar one at St Paul's. The handmade traditional Smeed Dean brick of the clerestory leads up to the octagonal lantern, or cupola, the high point both of the outside and inside.



A conscious decision was taken to retain part of the Gothic revival church of 1861 alongside the new classical cathedral. The east elevation juxtaposes the old and the new, linking them through the scale of the 1991 building and the sympathetic use of ragstone and Welsh slate roof tiles. All the Classical architectural orders are represented in the interior - the four giant Doric pilasters, the Tuscan arcade of arches, the Ionic pilasters of the Palladian windows in the east and west aisles, the Corinthian and Composite influences evident on the cathedral and the organ case. While the interior of the cathedral has a deliberately 'restrained' feeling to it, richness is to be found in the ceiling. The Roman key pattern and the double guilloche pattern, picked out in gold leaf, are dominant here. All the round-headed windows are in the Classical-Wren style, with clear leaded lights of hand-made glass.

With clear windows on all four sides, the cathedral is flooded with light at any time of the day. This, together with the white walls and stone floor, combines to give a translucent effect which uplifts the spirit and conveys its own sense of the presence of God. The cathedral is lit by brass English Classical chandeliers (one of which was formerly in the church at Epping) and, above the cornice, concealed lighting. The processional cross is a copy of a medieval design. The figure represents a transitional period in the theology of design where Christ still wears the crown of the Risen Lord, but the corpus is that of the crucified Saviour. The Bishop's chair or cathedral is a tangible sign of his presiding over the diocese. It was made in Pisa, in Nabrassina stone, and has steps of Portland stone. In the centre is the coat of arms of the diocese. The base of the seat is inlaid with slate, to match the floor.

Consecration crosses are incised into the stone of the Doric pilasters that hold up the clerestory. They were anointed like the altar, as a sign that the whole building is dedicated to God. On the feast of the Dedication the candles in front of the gilded crosses are lit. In the east aisle, there are two rooms set aside to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation or Confession. Opposite them is a crucifix, formerly in the church at Stock, Essex. Around the arcade are terracotta roundels representing the 15 Stations of the Cross. These were modelled by Raphael Maklouf, the well-known sculptor, who was responsible for the Queen's head on Commonwealth coinage from 1985 to 1997. Their milky glaze perfectly complements the subtlety and intimacy with which the familiar scenes have been expressed.

SUNDAY 1st JANUARY 2017

For my second visit to the City in three days, some of the churches were to be photographed again.







Cathedral, Norwich



St George's, Tombland, Norwich



St Simon and St Jude, Colegate, Norwich



St Clement's, Colegate, Norwich





St George's, Colegate, Norwich









St Saviours. St Saviour's Lane, Norwich (now a theatre)

This is one of many redundant churches in Norwich as it is sad that it is hemmed in and overshadowed by the modern City. It has been totally exposed by the clearance of buildings around it and has been given some monstrous neighbours into the bargain. It sits half way along Magdalene Street but the great flyover of the inner ring road soars beside it. The churchyard shown as pretty in pictures of a century ago, has been completely cleared for the ignominy of a car park and also close by is a public toilet. On the other side of the bypass is the massive block of Anglia Square and the hideous tower of Sovereign House, home of her majesty's stationery office.

The church is a sweet little thing, not an urban church at all. It looks for all the world like a village parish church that has come to the city and got lost. It now sits and shivers far from home, whilst the metropolitan whirl goes on around it.

Somewhere along the way it has lost the top third of its tower and the nineteenth century parapet replacement is small recompense. The medieval dedication of the church was to the Transfiguration of the Holy Saviour. In Victorian times this church was host to some fairly muscular low church worship and the Rector seems to have been quite a character. On one occasion a group of Anglo-Catholic monks settled themselves down here to stare him out at evensong, only to be chased out of the church and back to St Laurence by the irate minister.

The church survived the blitz but the area became very run down in the 1960's and once the flyover had cut it off from the houses of north Norwich there was not much chance of a future. The Brooke report recommended its closure and it was stripped bare with the font going off to St George's, Colegate. At first it became a badminton court and presumably served a useful purpose for this while it quietly rotted. Then as if by a miracle, salvation came to the church as the King's Church, Norwich branch of the new Frontiers International church were offered a lease by the City authority.

They had been looking for a central location for their youth outreach programme. They already had the lease on St Edmunds but this church was more prominent and in a visible location. In the early 1990's they completely renovated this building, using an architect's plans but doing most of the work themselves.





St James the Less, Norwich (now a puppet theatre)

This is nationally unique venue dedicated to puppetry housed in the medieval church of St James the Less a Grade 1 listed building. It currently houses a 175 seat raked auditorium. 50 seat Octagon Studio, workshops. An exhibition gallery, shop and licenced bar, and is the only theatre in the Eastern Region of the UK which has a round-year programme of family entertainment.

The former parish church became redundant but has since been converted into for use as a small theatre. It is currently being used by the Internationally important Norwich Puppet Theatre. The building dates back to the 15th and 16th centuries and is of flint with stone and brick dressings. The most eye catching feature of the building is the short three-stage tower, which rather than being built on the end of the nave, was actually built inside the church.

Inside this result the three-way portioning of the west-end, as the tower is supported by internal arched supports. Outside, the square tower rises a few metres before finishing in a small octagonal brick and stone turret dating to the eighteenth century. St James was one of the few buildings in this area to survive the combined depredations of the widening of the inner ring road in 1938 and the bombing of World War 2.

This area was previously densely populated with terraced streets, 17th century street fronts and small industry, but all of this is now gone, and St James stands almost squashed against the ring road.





St Edmunds, Fishergate, Norwich

The church is medieval dating from the thirteenth century. The nave was restored in the 1860s by Richard Phipson and the chancel by Ewan Christian. After being declared redundant as a parish church, the building was used as a factory store. Later it was used as the Norwich Pregnancy crisis centre. Its origins dates back to the 15th and 16th centuries. It has flint with stone and brick dressings. It had slate roofs also. From September 2014 it was in the care of the Norwich Historic Trust and is now used as a Christian House of prayer and has craft tables for children.



Norwich Cathedral





St Martin's at Palace Plain

This is one of the oldest churches in Norwich and it stands close to a stretch of the river bank which is on the site of the Law Courts. Traces of some of the earliest settlement have been found. The church is referred to in the Domesday book and excavations made during the conversion of the church in the 1980's revealed foundations of a Norman church as well as evidence of one, if not two, early Anglo-Saxon timber churches. The Norman Bishop's Palace and the remains of a Norman house (beneath the Law Courts) are testimony to the high status of this part of the city at that time.



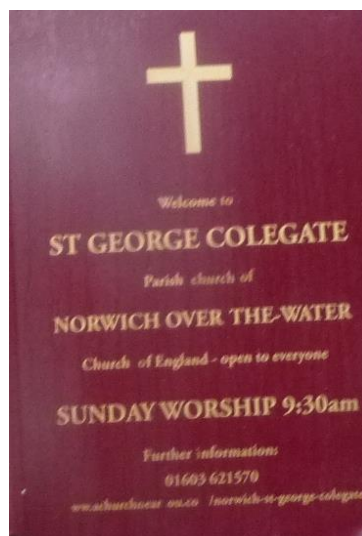
Octagon Chapel, Colegate, Norwich





Congregational, Colegate, Norwich





St George's, Colegate, Norwich

This is a medieval building which has a Georgian interior and is a calm light space with no stained glass. The building speaks for itself, and what you see is what you get. To the many passers-by during the week, they are a familiar landmark building standing at a busy crossroads in the city, and we are so grateful that they have the support of local businesses and residents.

Their worship is straightforward Anglican, accessible and undemonstrative. They enjoy intelligent open-minded sermons and good music, usually provided on our excellent organ (the original 1802 instrument in its original gallery position) that suits the building perfectly. The peal of six bells in the church tower is rung after the service on most Sundays.

They are a committed and growing congregation all playing their part in helping St George's Colegate meet its role as the parish church of Norwich Over-the-Water. In late 2010 we carried out a long-overdue project to update a 1960s kitchen and toilet to provide an accessible meeting room, thus helping to unlock the potential of the building for the next part of its history. In 2011 they managed to complete necessary repairs to external stonework and guttering.

The new parish room is now well used, for example for a lunchtime or evening course during Lent, holding their 'Dirty Shirt Club' meetings, and offering a place of retreat for parents and children during the Sunday service (which can be followed on a small TV screen).





St Michael's, Coslany Street, Norwich

This church is no longer in use for anything. In 2006 it was being used as the Inspire Centre. It was built in the 16th century perpendicular in all its glory, with stunning flushwork across the east end and the aisles. The Southern aisle is curious because the west side of it, is one bay short of the north aisle's west end. There must have been a simply enormous two-storey porch here at one time.



St Martin's, Oak Street. Norwich

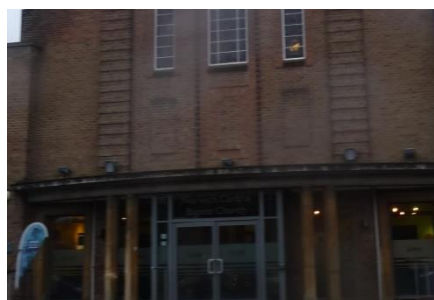
This poor little church sits to the north of the city centre in Coslany, just to the south of the inner ring road. This became an area of shoe factories and publishing houses - indeed, the factory to the south-east of the church is the same one that stands to the north-west of St Mary Coslany.

Although St Martin was still in use until the Second World War, it was destroyed by bombs in January 1942, only its truncated tower and walls of the nave and chancel surviving. George Plunkett's three photographs below, taken over thirty years, show the process by which the tower was reduced and the walls and roofs restored. The architect of the rebuilding, completed in 1953, was John Chaplin.



St Mary's Plain, Coslany, Norwich

Although it is one the 36 odd surviving medieval parish churches in the Centre of Norwich, it is so old that it actually predates that time and probably was the original parish church of the Anglo-Saxon settlement of Coslany. Indeed its thousand year old tower may post date that status.



Central Baptist Church, Norwich

This is a friendly and active Baptist church community in the heart of the city. The church family includes people of all ages, social backgrounds and gifts. They have plenty to offer the local community throughout the week, not just on Sundays. They have a heart for outreach and a strong emphasis on bible teaching.



Zoar Baptist Church, Norwich



St Lawrence, St Benedict's Street, Norwich

This is a redundant Anglican church and is recorded in the National Heritage list as designated grade 1 and is under the care of the Churches Trust. It stands on the sloping site between Westwick Street and St Benedict's Street. The church was built between 1460 and 1472. It was restored in 1893, during which a corner turret was added to the tower. Towards the end of the 19th century the size of the congregation declined and in 1903 its parish was united with that of St Gregory's. The church was finally closed in 1968 and was later vested in the Church Conservation Trust.



St Margarets, St Benedict's Street, Norwich (Arts Centre)

St Margaret was recommended for redundancy and eventual demolition by the Brooke Report, the first of these ensuing in 1975, by which time the report's plan to demolish the churches and sell off their sites had been defeated, largely by popular outcry. The city council had wanted to wipe out the jumble of medieval and later buildings that form the wedge between Westwick Street and St Benedict's Street, and turn it into a really sexy traffic junction.

It has four lanes of cars and lorries coming together from two different levels to be funnelled down St Andrew's Street and into Bank Plain. Now, thirty years later, we find it preferable to keep traffic out of our cities, and it is salutary to think that we came close to losing our heritage for a temporary town-planning fashion.

St Margaret can seem a brooding building after dark, set back as it is from the road, and so it is pleasing to go inside and find that it is full of light, during the day at least. For a few years it was used as a gymnasium, but after lying empty it is now an exhibition space, also used for antiques fairs.

George Plunkett's 1930s image shows it as a typical urban town centre church. As with most churches in this part of Norwich, St Margaret lost all its Victorian glass to German bombs, and had the good fortune, as at St Martin Palace Plain, to have some good 1960s glass installed in its stead. The east window is a gorgeous abstract Ascension by David King, while the St Margaret in the south aisle chapel is more conventional but equally beautiful.



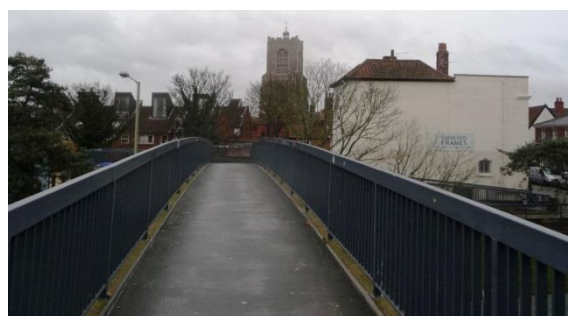
St Swithin's, St Benedict's Street, Norwich (now Art Centre)

This is one of four medieval churches in the road, one of the smallest, and was even derelict in the nineteenth century. The tall elegant tower with the porch built directly into its south side, and was taken down as unsafe in the 1880's, and the church was closed shortly afterwards. Indications are that it may have an Anglo Saxon foundation date. The original church was probably no larger than the one we see today. Its development has been restricted by its site.

Rich enough to rebuild the church as it stands in the fifteenth century, and still containing some well-to-do parishioners in the eighteenth by the nineteenth the parish had become a slum

Exterior – the church appears very odd from the outside and there is no tower, and no obvious entrance. The tower became very unsafe and was demolished in 1882, and replaced by the turret. There were porches either side of it, as at St Gregory. Entrance was through the west door.

The windows are of the decorated style, through those in the clerestorey are square-headed perpendicular. They show that it is a building of four bays, with no separate chancel. The rood-stair turret on the north side shows the original screen crossed half-way along, giving a chancel and nave of two bays each. Also on the North side is the mission hall built in 1908 and as large as the church itself. This was as a result of a generous benefaction.



St Giles on the Hill, Upper St Giles Street, Norwich

The church was originally founded by a priest called Elwyn and given by him to the monks of Norwich. It was appropriated by Theobald, Archbishop of Canterbury (between 1139 and 1161) to the monks, at which time it was a Rectory.

The monks settled the church on their infirmary, and no vicarage was endowed. It became a 'donative' in the dean and chapter, who appointed a chaplain.

There has been a Church on the site since before the Normans came to Norwich, but there is no trace of that building now. St Giles Church as it stands today has its origins in 1386, when a bequest was given to start the building the church. By 1424, the tower was almost finished, and by 1430 the building was complete enough for funerals to take place. The chancel is more modern and was built during the 19th century. In 1650, after the Reformation, St Giles had a Rector, Henry Drewry.

When entering the Church you make your way through a very fine porch, which was added about a century after the main Church was built, and which has a noble carved stone façade, a fine fan vaulted roof and a small room above, called a parvise.

The main Church of St Giles consists of a nave with two side aisles, separated by an arcade of five bays. Tall piers of what Pevsner calls "an odd design" of four shafts and many thin moldings in between, with more towards the nave than towards the aisles, support the high rising arches. The great arches into the chancel and into the tower space correspond to them.

There are three tiers of niches on either side of the chancel arch, one of which holds the statue of St Giles, the patron saint of the Church, removing an arrow from the flesh of an injured deer. St Giles was connected with lepers, and a hospital for lepers was formerly close by beside the gate in the city walls of Norwich, called St. Giles' Gate.

There are two brass lecterns in the Church, which take the form eagles. One of these is a rare fifteenth century example, the other from the nineteenth century. The Bible is read out from the lectern, and its lessons are explained from the pulpit. St Giles Church also has a number of fine memorials to departed parishioners. (St Giles Street was formerly the street where the doctors of Norwich lived). The tower of St Giles Church, which is about 35 metres, is best admired from outside the Church, and is strikingly beautiful from many vantage points.

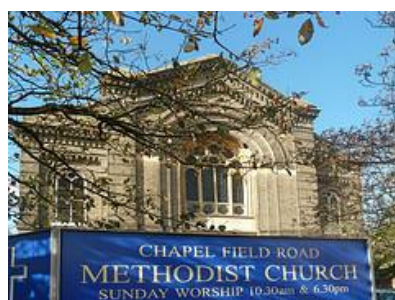
It contains a peal of eight bells, three of which date from 1430. The peal is rung every Sunday morning before the 10.30 service and on other occasions, such as weddings. On the top of the tower is the cupola of 1737 which contains the clock bell.

This takes the place of the beacon cresset now in the South aisle which dates from the 1497 will of Thomas Colton who was saved from drowning in the nearby marshes by the ringing of St. Giles' bells leading him to higher ground. He requested that the beacon be lit and he provided a piece of land to pay for the Church's maintenance.

In the present day, St Giles is part of the Catholic tradition of the Church of England. The Blessed Sacrament is reserved on the high altar, prayers are asked of our lady and the saints, and the Eucharist is offered, the scriptures read and the word preached amidst the sound of bells and the smoke of incense.



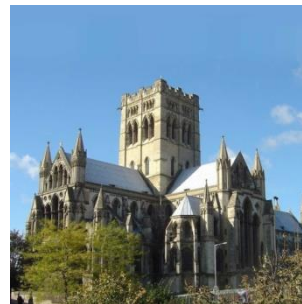
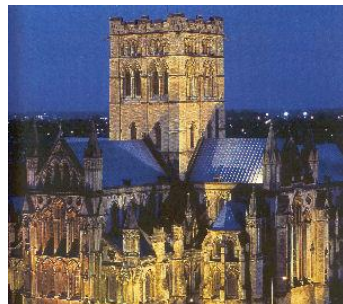
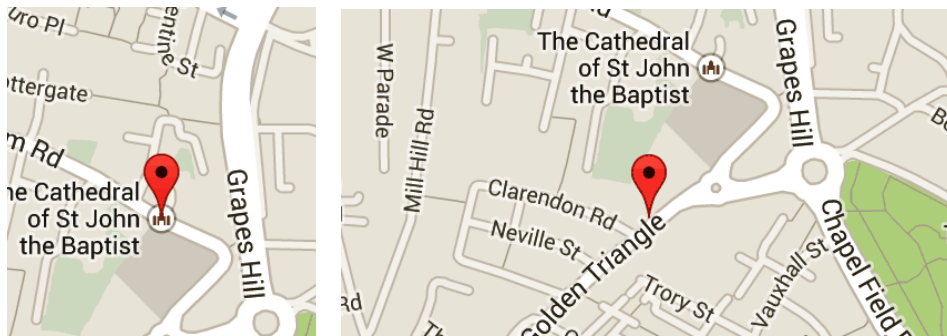
Personal view 2013 - my next road I needed was Chapelfield Road, this was the area on the edge of the shops running from St Stephens Street, and it was a turn off at the roundabout there.



Chapelfield Road Methodist, Chapelfield Road, Norwich

They strive to be a forward thinking church, reaching out and anticipating the future needs of their community here in Norwich; however they are also fond of the history associated with their church. The church receives many interested visitors during Heritage Open Days. Chapelfield Road was opened on 14th July 1881, and built to seat almost 1,000 worshippers. By 1891 there was an exciting and imaginative Sunday School with over 1,000 children attending. In the 1930s, thought was again given to a new Sunday School building, one that would be absolutely up-to-date and reflect new methods of teaching, but the plans were shelved: in 1942 the greater part of the Sunday School was demolished during bombing.

Eventually, in 1954 came the eagerly awaited stone-laying for the new Sunday School. It was a fine purpose-built school with a large upstairs hall, with a good stage and a number of rooms on the ground floor. These rooms form the basis of our premises today, which were further enhanced in 2001 when the Church Centre was opened. This provided a new entrance, between the two buildings, to both the church hall and the church itself. Some practical facilities were remodeled at the same time, and on the first floor, a new, small worship area, the Upper Room, was designed and furnished.





Catholic Cathedral, Unthank Road, Norwich

John's is the second largest Catholic cathedral in the UK. After nearly a century as the parish church of the Catholic community in Norwich it became the mother church of the new diocese of East Anglia in 1976. It now takes its place with its 'elder sister', the Anglican cathedral which is located in the centre of the city. Norwich is one of the few English cities to have two cathedrals and, over the last 30 years, we have grown closer in a spiritual and practical partnership. As well as being a beautiful building St John's is a place of prayer that is open every day to all who come in search of peace and tranquillity. It is also the home of a large parish community. I warmly welcome you to our website. I hope that it will give you a taste of the splendour of the building as well as the spiritual atmosphere which sets it apart as a house of prayer.

The cathedral, located on Earlham Road, was constructed between 1882 and 1910 to designs by George Gilbert Scott, Jr. as a parish church dedicated to John the Baptist, on the site of the Norwich City Gaol. The funds for its construction were provided by Henry Fitzalan-Howard, 15th Duke of Norfolk. He funded it as a generous gift to the Catholics of Norwich as a sign of thanksgiving for his first marriage to Lady Flora Abney-Hastings. 1976, it was consecrated as the cathedral church for the newly erected Diocese of East Anglia and the seat of the Bishop of East Anglia. It is the second largest Roman Catholic cathedral in England.

It is one of two cathedrals in the city of Norwich, the other being the Church of England Cathedral Church of the Holy and Undivided Trinity, completed in the Norman style in 1145. Just off the south aisle of the cathedral is the Duckett Library. It was named after Canon Richard Duckett who was rector of the church from 1876 to 1910. It was opened on 22 February 2012. People need to become a member of the library to join, and that membership is available to all the cathedral's congregation. It has 3,000 religious publications and is staffed by volunteers. Also, within the cathedral ground is the Narthex. It opened in March 2010 and is the cathedral's visitor centre. It comprises an Education and Interpretation Gallery, a shop, a refectory with outdoor patio, a function hall, licensed bar and community garden. The cathedral's parish also covers Holy Apostles Church, West Earham, in a suburb of Norwich, and, for the time being, Our Lady and St Walstan, Costessey, four miles west of the city. In addition, it also offers a Sunday evening service at St Mark's, the Church of England parish church of Lakenham.

Personal view 2013 - in my walking, by now it was starting to rain, so my waterproof mac was on, and I was back crossing the road bridge which from the indications on my map, meant the photos above are of Grapes Hill and on the right, it was Giles on the Hill.



Ihsan Centre, 17 Chapelfield East, Norwich

MONDAY 2nd JANUARY 2017



URC, Diss, Norfolk







St Mary the Virgin, Diss, Norfolk

This is a medieval church dating back mainly to the fourteenth century with later alterations and extensions. The church is said to stand on the site of a late Saxon or Norman church, although there is no surviving architectural evidence from this period. The chancel is said to stand on Saxo-Norman foundations. The church is basically of about 1300, extended and altered in fourteenth and fifteenth century with the chancel altered in 1857. In 1773 in making a vault beneath the church at a depth of 1.5 metres, two urns of red earth full of black foetid earth were found. One holding 14 pints and the other 15 pints. A stone coffin was also found.

In May 1988 excavations were made in advance of an extension to the church hall and medieval flints knapping waste were found. There were also post medieval sherds and pot medieval burials.

To be continued in Book 6