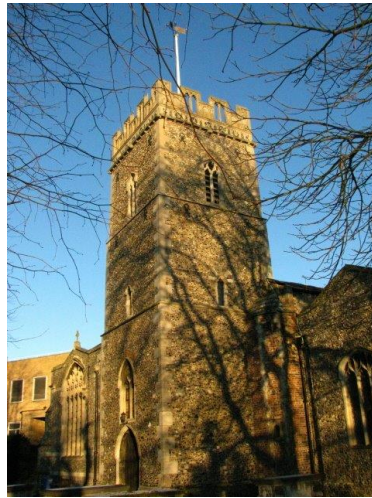




**CHURCHES VISITED AND REVISITED
(17/12/16 TO DATE) – BOOK 15**



MONDAY 16th OCTOBER 2017



St Matthews, Portman Road, Ipswich

In the 1960s, Ipswich went mad. Town planners devised a scheme whereby the population would rise towards half a million, and the existing town centre would be encircled and crossed by urban motorways. They didn't get very far before the men in white coats came and took them away, releasing them into the wild somewhere like Croydon or Coventry; but the towering Civic Centre, the brutalism police station and court buildings survive as evidence of their ambitions, and the four lane Civic Drive cuts across what was the Mount residential area, the little terraces all demolished to make way for the 20th century.

Now, the Civic centre, the courts and police station are all themselves to be demolished. The new Ipswich plan designates this whole area for residential use, and the civil servants have all moved down to the river. This new plan, if it emerges, can only serve St Matthew's well, sitting beside Civic Drive as it does, and cut off from the town centre by it.

St Matthew's is perhaps, less well-known than the other working town centre churches. Partly, this is because it is the only one of them which is kept locked, but also because it is such an effort to get to if you are a visitor. Because of this, many people don't realise that it contains a treasure of national importance. It is the font, which is quite unlike any other in Suffolk.

Before we come to it, the church building itself is worth examining. This must once have been quite a small church, but is now a big one. Its core is 15th century, including the lower part of the tower. Nothing else is. Its 19th century expansion can be explained by the proximity of the Ipswich Barracks, for this became the Garrison church. This resulted in the huge aisles, as wide as the nave.

The chancel was also rebuilt, but retaining its medieval roof. Until 1970, the church was hemmed in to the east, but the construction of Civic Drive opened up this view, which isn't a particularly good one, particularly from the north east. It comes as a surprise to find the west end on Portman Road quite so pastoral, but the hidden graveyard surrounding the tower is quite beautiful, and would once have been the familiar view. Ancestor hunters will be horrified to learn that the greater part of the graveyard was built over in the 1960s, with the construction of a church school to the south. All those graves are under the playground now. The part of the graveyard to the east fell foul of the road, and those immediately beyond the chancel were turned into a garden, now the preserve of homeless drinkers. A footpath runs along the north side, which will take you through to the main entrance, the west door, under the tower. You step into a broadly Victorian interior, and find the font in the north aisle. East Anglia is famous for its Seven Sacrament fonts, 13 of which are in Suffolk. These show the seven sacraments of the Catholic Church, and are rare survivals; so much Catholic iconography was destroyed by the Protestant reformers of the 16th century, and the Puritans of the 17th century. Here at St Matthew, we find an even rarer survival of England's Catholic past; a series of images of events associated with the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Before describing it, I have to make the point that this really is one of the dozen most important and significant medieval art survivals in Suffolk, and one of the finest 15th century fonts in England.

There is nothing as good as this in the Victorian and Albert Museum, or in the British Museum. I make this point simply because the lovely lady who showed the group around did not seem to realise quite how important the font was, and gave the impression that the parish, though they care for it lovingly, also did not realise what a treasure, what a jewel, they had on the premises. Of the eight panels, two bear elaborate fleurons, but five of them depict events in the story of Mary, mother of Jesus. These five reliefs, and a sixth of the Baptism of Christ, are amazing art objects. They show the Annunciation to the Blessed Virgin, The Adoration of the Magi, the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin, the Coronation of the Queen of Heaven, and the Mother of God Enthroned.



Ipswich International Elim, Barrack Corner, Ipswich

Ipswich International Church is part of the Elim Pentecostal denomination with several branches across the country.

They are blessed to be a multinational congregation represented by all generations, we seek to be a family friendly church, where everybody feels part of a family.

They have a thriving and active Sunday School and Youth department.

They seek to express this through relational cells and home-groups, they also encourage everybody to find a place to serve within one of the ministries in the Church.

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St Mary at the Elms, Blackhorse Lane

St Mary at the Elms is an Anglican parish church in the heart of the commercial centre of Ipswich. The church serves a lively congregation and provides daily a place for contemplation, prayer and worship for anyone visiting or working in the area. Their Anglo-Catholic tradition values the sacramental life of the church, adhering strongly to doctrine such as the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist and the continuity of the apostolic orders of Bishop, Priest and Deacon.

A significant stress on liturgy and worship - performed in order to maintain the beauty of holiness - makes worship in an Anglo-Catholic church an experience which is intended to appeal to one's whole person - to heart as well as head, to senses as well as intellect.

The church is affiliated to Forward in Faith and the PCC has passed resolutions A, B & C. These resolutions make provision for those who have theological reservations about the ordination of women to the priesthood and episcopate within the Church of England.

They ensure that a male priest will always preside at mass and puts the care of the parish under +Norman, Bishop of Richborough and Honorary Bishop of the diocese of St Edmundsbury & Ipswich.

At 8.30 am on Saturday 25th July 2010 a fire broke out in what was then the Walsingham Chapel at the base of the tower. The contents of the chapel and the first floor of the tower were lost and the nave suffered smoke and heat damage.

Renovation work - including the rewiring and redecoration of the church, rebuilding the interior of the tower, and the refurbishment of the organ and the C16th tower clock - was completed in August 2012.

The new screen installed at the base of the tower includes a re-designed memorial to the parishioners who died in the two world wars, replacing the WWI memorial lost in the fire.

A thanksgiving service, attended by some of those who worked on the church renovations as well as many friends and supporters of St Mary at the Elms, was held on Saturday 9th November 2013 with Bishop Norman presiding.



Methodist, Museum Street, Ipswich and back entrance, Black Horse Lane

In 1812, a group of like-minded Wesleyans formed a congregation which met in Long Lane, and in 1816 they built themselves Ebenezer Wesleyan Chapel in Market Lane, both these now-lost Ipswich thoroughfares being in St Lawrence parish in the town centre.

At the time of the 1851 Census of Religious Worship, the Market Lane chapel was recorded as having 735 seats - that is to say, it was a large building.

The minister, Ebenezer Moulton, recorded about 300 worshippers present on the morning of the census, and about the same number in the afternoon.

In 1860, the community raised the money for a similar-sized church but with the addition of parish rooms and a school, to be built not far off in Museum Street.

The architect was Frederick Barnes, who designed a number churches in the Ipswich area, although he is perhaps best known for the Great Eastern Railway stations along the Ipswich to Cambridge line. This site in Museum Street was purchased for £1,300 in March 1860.

The foundation stone, to be found at the foot of the square pillar to the right of the three central arches, was laid by Mr William Pretty with a silver trowel which is on display in the church. The building opened for worship on Wednesday 27 March 1861. The church organ, a gift from William Pretty came from St Lawrence Church in Dial Lane.

William Pretty's name appears on other buildings in the town (including Alan Road Methodist Church).

A Minister's House was erected at the rear of the church and is still in use as Church Circuit Office with a flat on the first floor. Many improvements have been made since the opening in 1861. In 1935, when the organ was thought to be beyond repair, plans were made to replace it.

The Second World War saw the project shelved until 1948 when the organ was restored at a cost of £1,000.

In 1954, two cottages in Black Horse Lane, the property of the trustees, were demolished after they were condemned by the public health authorities and the area made into a car park.

In 1959, as the church prepared to celebrate its centenary, the front entrance lobbies were redesigned and the interior of the church reversed and modern lighting installed. From the new entrance you walk along a corridor which leads into the various parish rooms, and then eventually through a small doorway into the church beyond. With the gallery above, it is hard to imagine that the church was once the other way around.

The 1960s patronage of Bernard Sadler of the Sadler & Sons building firm, in memory of members of his family, provided one of the very best post-war windows in Ipswich, by AE Buss.

The four lights depict Christ in the Carpenter's Shop; Christ Healing the Sick, of such is the Kingdom of God, and the Ascension of Christ.

The children in the Kingdom of God window are the grandchildren of the donor.

In 1988 Bishop and Son of Ipswich completely dismantled the organ, which had become tired, worn and dangerous with old electrics. The rebuild used around 800 existing pipes and added 600 new ones. Work was completed in 1990.

In 1999 the church again saw a big refurbishment "Millennium Faithlift". A sophisticated lighting system was installed and a suspended glass cross radiates light to all points of worship. A rededication service was held in November 1999 by the minister the Rev David Blatherwick. Chairs have since replaced pews.



St Mary's, Catholic, Woodbridge Road, Ipswich

St Mary's, often called St Mary Woodbridge Road, is a Catholic church in Ipswich which has the largest congregation in the town and the second largest congregation in Suffolk. Its parish hall is the site of the first post reformation Catholic church in Ipswich, St Antony. It is part of the Diocese of East Anglia.

St Mary's was founded by a French priest, Abbé Louis Pierre Simon, when he escaped from the threat of the French Revolution and settled in Ipswich to teach. He was offered lodgings by a Catholic woman, Miss Margaret Wood, who later became his friend.

Due to the prevalence of the revolution, Catholics found it hard to profess their faith in public at the time. Père Simon was able to gather the local Catholics into one community through his faithful pastoral work. When the French wars were over, Père Simon decided to devote his life to working for the community in Ipswich. He bought a house in Albion Hill (now known as Woodbridge Road), which is presently used as a convent for nuns. Despite objections from the townspeople, Père Simon was able to add a small chapel dedicated to St Anthony.

The chapel was consecrated on August 1, 1827, by the Vicar Apostolic and Dr T. Walsh, and was attended by a number of individuals. It was soon found to be small, so the structure was enlarged to the northern and southern area, opening directly to Woodbridge Road. The new nave is 76 feet long.

Dr. Walsh blessed the extended chapel on October 10, 1838, which was dedicated to Mary.

Père Simon and Margaret Wood are both remembered by their plaques in the parish hall, which was the church they founded.



Buddhist Centre, Friars Bridge Road

Ipswich's Buddhists have opened a new centre which replaces the old one in the town centre.

The new venue is in an old Ransomes factory on Friars Bridge Road near the Princes Street roundabout. The old centre was above shops in The Thoroughfare behind a fairly anonymous-looking doorway. Buddhist secretary Swadipa said: "We were renting it and loads of people who've lived in Ipswich all their lives and didn't realise it was there." "As with quite a few people, I was drawn to Buddhism because I was finding work quite stressful, as anybody who's worked in the NHS can sympathise with," said Swadipa. After years of planning, the Buddhists moved into their new premises in July. It has a meeting room, meditation room, kitchen, study room, office and a lift to provide access for people with disabilities.

The Ipswich Buddhist Group (members of the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order) was founded in 1985 and operated out of someone's front room before classes moved around a variety of hired rooms. In 2001, the operated their own centre above the Buddhist Evolution shop just off the Cornhill. "We made it a very nice space", said Swadipa. "We did enquire with the landlord about putting a sign above the door, but that proved to be difficult". The new building is the same size as the old Thoroughfare venue which covered two floors above the shops. It cost £165,000 to buy and was mainly funded by the sale of the Buddhist community house (or 'maitrilooka') on Hadleigh Road. "Unfortunately, living in a community was becoming less popular with people, so occupation and rent was dropping. We were to get a bit of capital together, but we still have a mortgage and encourage people to attend and give generously". The main space in the building is for meditation, which requires a certain amount of peace and tranquility. It's right next to a busy roundabout, but Swadipa said it's not as noisy as you'd think: "Surprisingly, our experience in the building is that it's not too bad.

"Most of our activities are at evenings and weekends and, at those times, it doesn't seem to be a big problem."

David becomes Swadipa Like most western Buddhists, Swadipa found the religion, rather than being born into it, and eventually decided to take a Buddhist name alongside the name his parents gave him, which was/is David Vasey. "It's quite nerve-wracking [the naming ceremony] that someone's going to be looking at you and selecting a name with a meaning that reflects something about you. 'Dipa' means lamp or light and 'swa' means to himself or his own - so a light to himself. "So that's my task now - to make my life a bit brighter and shine for other people."

FRIDAY 20th OCTOBER 2017





St Mary's, Church Square, Bures

St Mary's has been a Christian presence in the heart of Bures for over 600 years. Their wonderful historic church building sits at the heart of the village and is surrounded by many beautiful and interesting properties (over 65 are listed). With many fine features their medieval church is largely of 14th century origin with 15th and 16th century additions. Its many interesting features, including Medieval Graffiti, make this a fascinating building for visitors.

This is a fine old riverside town, partly in Suffolk and partly in Essex. The same was once true of nearby Sudbury, but the Ballingdon district there was drawn into Suffolk by boundary changes in the 1950s. Tradition survives here, and this is still a split town. The Essex side is called Bures Hamlet, but is now the larger part, with a railway station and housing estates.

The River Stour is the border, and it flows not far from the western edge of the churchyard. The Suffolk side styles itself Bures St Mary; however, this church was never dedicated to St Mary until the 19th century Anglican revival, when one of the results of the Oxford Movement was a renewed interest in church dedications. The confusion arose because of a now-vanished chapel in the churchyard dedicated to the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin. In fact, the dedication of this church in medieval times was probably to the feast of All Saints. You can enter the church through either the north or the south porches, but both are lovely. The red brick early 16th century south porch in particular is stately and grand, with its fine holy water stoup with supporting figures, and wide open space suited for the conduct of parish business.

There is a fearsome exterior head stop low on the west side, which must surely be older than the porch - 13th century, I should think. Either the Tudors reused it, or the Victorians placed it here during their restoration. The south porch window traceries are beautiful, particularly that to the west. The older wooden north porch is rather more beautiful than useful, but is the more familiar, as it faces on to the busy main road. Above the porches rises Richard de Waldegrave's tower of the late 14th century. However, the base of the tower is a survival of an earlier one, and on its southern side is a curious tomb recess, now empty.

Don't go inside without seeing the church from the east, with the red-brick Waldegrave chantry creating a very effective massing. Its east window rather puts that of the chancel to shame. This is a quintessential Anglican church, its 19th and 20th century reorderings typical of thousands of large, prosperous buildings. But there are unusual things in this church, all worth going to see, and in any case I think the whole piece is done very well. The lighting scheme in particular is a great credit to the parish, who obviously care about the interior of their building being beautiful. If you look up, you will see that the ceiling consists of flat, wooden patterns, with modern lighting units set into them. Mortlock credits the woodwork to Ewan Christian, who carried out the 19th century restoration, but it looks much more recent to me, possibly 1930s. The lighting system is from the 1990s. I like the way the arcades are lit from beneath, creating the effect of an undercroft.

In the sanctuary and to the north of the altar, one of the Waldegrave tombs sits grandly beside the high camp Victoriana. It has been rather battered by the fortunes of history; its brass has long gone, but the grand corbels that supported its also-vanished wooden canopy survive. It is to Richard de Waldegrave, who built the tower, and was used as an Easter sepulchre. The painting of the reredos and altar is not of the highest quality (the nice Scottish lady who showed me round said she preferred it covered with a frontal) but actually it works rather well as an assemblage, and the lighting I mentioned previously works to very good effect. The same cannot be said of the terrible glass in the east window, poor in both design and quality. They should consider getting rid of it, before English Heritage notice it.

The large open space to the south of the chancel is the Waldegrave chantry. A tomb in the south east corner, actually a cobbling together of two separate Waldegrave tombs, has lost its brasses, but the standing memorial to the west is more complete, although all the little weepers have lost their praying hands. It remembers a William Waldegrave who died in the early 17th century, and the more you look at it the odder it gets. For instance, although the ten weepers are in their conventional position, there are no effigies of the remembered dead. Even odder, the memorial inscription is on the back of the tomb, and ordinarily out of sight. This memorial is curiously awkwardly placed, and feels rather in the way, until you remember that for three hundred years after the Reformation the liturgy had no need for gangways for processions, or for views of altars. The tomb was probably placed deliberately so. The Waldegraves were not popular people in this parish, apparently. At the time of the Anglican reformers in the 1540s, there was a general uprising here and the destruction in the church was so severe that the churchwardens were punished. A hundred years later, the puritans meted out their fundamentalist justice to the Waldegrave children, removing their hands. And yet, this rather ugly tomb still sits here, and who remembers the puritans now?



The location of the tomb is a pity, because the eastward view in the chapel is otherwise its triumph. The five light window contains a modern glass memorial to the Waldegraves, including the Catholic inscription that, of our charity, we should pray for their souls. The Sarum screen backing the altar beneath is very effective.

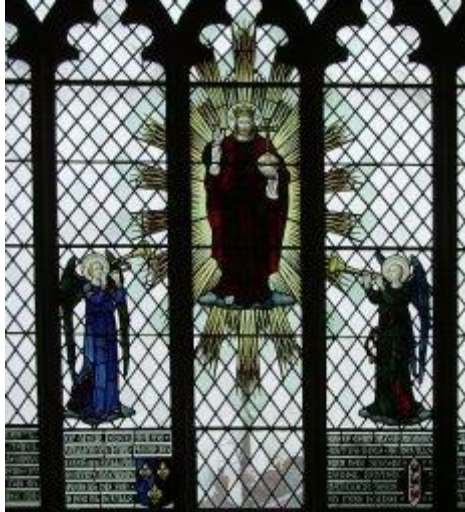
Heading back into the body of the church, a wooden effigy of a knight can be found on a north aisle window recess, which is obviously not its original place. It dates from about 1330, and is made of chestnut. No one really knows who he is, although some books mention someone called Richard de Cornard, which sounds a neat Meeism. The lion under his feet has a rather sad expression, I think. Suffolk's only other wooden medieval effigy is across the county at Heveningham. Mortlock says that the survival of his shield is notable and rare. This knight effigy may or may not have come from Bures church originally; there is no way of telling now.



The most unusual feature of St Mary is something you would not notice, or even think to look for unless you knew it was there. This is a strange little octagonal segment that juts out about ten feet up on the eastern face of the south side of the chancel arch. It is, of all things, a piscina. What is it doing up there? We need to imagine the rood screen, rood beam and rood loft, and all the liturgical paraphernalia of the pre-Reformation church. The rood loft here had an altar on it, and this piscina served the altar. Why is it so rare? Simply, this chancel arch was built with a drain inside it. Most rood loft altars must have managed with a takeaway bowl. An extraordinary thing, in many ways. I was glad I'd seen it.

Elsewhere in this large village, a medieval chapel to St Stephen has been restored from the barn it was used for many years, and now contains fine tombs of de Veres rescued from Earls Colne Priory.

I'm always conscious along the River Stour of how civilised the south of Suffolk seems, and how wild Essex looks beyond it, as if the 21st century hadn't quite made it yet along the narrow lanes from County Hall at Chelmsford. On my bike, I was tempted to head off into it, into the unknown; but knowing the glory of Wissington was near at hand on the Suffolk side of the river, I was dissuaded from defecting.



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Jehovah Witness, Station Road, Sudbury



Salvation Army, Station Road, Sudbury



Their church leaders are committed to transforming the lives of people in their community



Society of Friends, Quakers, Friars Street, Sudbury

The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) has been active in Sudbury since the 17th century. Our Meeting House in Friars Street was built in 1805. In the 19th century a School Room was built on to the front of the building. In recent years this room has been hired out to the Muslim community, to the Sudbury Art Society, the music group, the Sudbury branch of the United Nations organisation, and many other organisations. Four years ago we were left a large legacy by John Savage. Some of this money was donated to various deserving charities in the Sudbury area, and the remainder dedicated to refurbishing the Meeting House. This work is now complete, and we are now meeting in a building which is fit for the 21st century.



Sudbury Baptist, Church Street, Sudbury

For Christians, following Jesus shapes the whole of life, not just Sundays. There's plenty going on all through the week with an emphasis on encouraging and supporting one another in everyday living. There's bound to be something for you!

They are situated close to the centre of a lovely Suffolk market town on the edge of the Vale of Dedham. The church is an exciting place where people of all ages enjoy meeting together to worship God, and find their place in serving him and making a difference in the world.

Church Mission Statement

Their goal is '*To make Jesus known and real.*' They encourage the working out of this goal individually as they each serve God where he has placed us. As a church, the Mission Statement underpins their mission and ministry in many different community activities locally, and in their commitment to World Mission. In 2009 they sent a team to Soweto, South Africa, with BMS World Mission & they support their BMS link missionaries. This year they are joining with other churches in the town to carry out a Sudbury Mission in May.

They continually challenge the Church with this goal by encouraging engagement with activities run in the church but also with activities run within their local community. They have an active Sunday youth programme, engaging all ages, and have mid-week groups for the 9-18 age range which have a more mission based aim. Their pre-school groups continue to thrive. They have a well established weekly group for the older members of their community (Meeting Point) and they also run 'Holiday at Home' which is a 3 day programme for the elderly during August, averaging about 60 people. All groups are run by volunteers from within the church fellowship.

They now have a well established 'Messy Church' which has been running for 5 years with 30-40 families attending, their challenge now is to offer the next step for those seeking faith. During school holidays we run SNAP (Special Needs Activities and Play) days which has a committed group of families with special needs children who receive support and play.

They have a particular financial commitment to Baptist Home Mission and BMS World Mission. We also give to many other bodies who are helping to take the message of Jesus to other parts of the world. As a church this year we gave 18% of our income directly to outreach and mission.

Church Style

The church is founded on the Word and Sacrament. They are evangelical and bible based, and open to the leading of the Holy Spirit. Groups from the church regularly attend Grapevine/One in Lincoln which is organised by 'new life' churches.

They seek to be a welcoming church to all. Leadership is provided by a team of men & women appointed to serve as Deacons by the Church Meeting.

Service

Sunday worship is the focal point of their life together. Services are mostly informal, using both newer more traditional worship styles and songs with some use of traditional hymns, the style varies depending on who is leading the worship but the format is generally standard. We have several gifted worship leaders, supported by our music group which comprises of various instruments including keyboard, guitars, wind, brass, strings and drums. A variety of people lead services.

Each service includes the reading of scripture and prayer and lasts approx 75 mins, the children leaving after 15 mins for their groups. At the heart of our worship is the preaching of God's word, which is designed to help Christians live out their faith in the world. Our services are usually held at 10.30am and 6.30pm.

On Sunday mornings we usually have around 110-130 adults & 30-40 children of all ages in worship. Sunday evening attendance is between 20-40 people. Visitors are always welcome. Refreshments are served in the rear halls following most morning services, and all are welcome to stay.

We celebrate the Lord's Supper twice each month, usually on the first Sunday morning and third Sunday evening.

All who love the Lord Jesus and are seeking to follow him in their daily living are welcome to share the bread and wine.

A full program for children & young people are available on Sunday mornings.







All Saints, Church Street, Sudbury

Sudbury is a good town, with plenty of interesting early survivals in its medieval street plan. Together with its extensive suburb of Great Cornard, Sudbury forms Suffolk's seventh largest town, and it is surrounded on two sides by the county border between Suffolk and Essex. Early modern Sudbury was prosperous enough to be divided up into three parishes. These were All Saints, St Gregory and St Peter, the last of which had been carved out of St Gregory's parish. St Peter and St Gregory were later recombined, and St Peter's church on the market place has fallen into disuse, but All Saints remains as a separate parish, just as in the 15th Century.

The grand tower is best seen when approaching the town from the south, when it appears above the neighbouring medieval inn. Ballingdon, that part of the parish south of the Stour, was in Essex until the 20th Century, a curious anomaly. The main road rushes you past, and so unless you turn off to take the winding lane to the south of the church that might well be your only sight of All Saints.

If you do investigate, you will find that the medieval street pattern severely curtails the churchyard, with the east end of the chancel hard against the road. It is as if it has been shoehorned onto the site. There are surviving graves to south and north, with a fine rectory overlooking the north side of the churchyard. The large mausoleum in the middle is that to the Gainsborough family, merchants of this town, whose most famous member was the artist, Thomas. His statue stands on Market Hill, outside St Peter; but he himself is buried in London.

This is a handsome exterior, and alone of Sudbury's churches had a spire, which came down in the early 19th century. The church was completely rebuilt in the 15th century, and the tower has similarities with that of St Gregory. Seen from the meadows to the west of the town, All Saints is the grander. There was once a porch on either side, but both have gone. Beside the south door, there is a very handsome holy water stoup.

Just as St Gregory is in the High Church tradition, so All Saints complements it by being evangelical in character. Perhaps because of this the church is kept locked, but there are keyholders listed. Unfortunately, I forgot to ask which door the key was to, which led to the slightly absurd experience of going from the south side to the north side several times trying to get a door open. I must admit that it took me some time to discover that the key fitted an almost hidden keyhole in the south door.

Even on a sunny day, this church is rather gloomier than its neighbour St Gregory. Some home made banners lining the pillars of the arcades cheered it up a bit. Above, the arches are decorated with shields and paterae, and the clerestory lights a fine 15th century roof. The woodwork is the most interesting feature of the nave. The pre-Reformation woodwork of the pulpit supposedly survived in such good condition by being boarded over for many centuries. The IHS symbol is a later addition by that great Victorian craftsman Henry Ringham.

In 2001 there was a stunning lectern in the form of a standing angel, forming the parish war memorial, but this no longer appears to be in situ. It was pleasing to find that the old benches were still here, as churches of evangelical character have exhibited an enthusiasm for replacing them with modern chairs in recent years. There are bell carvings on the most westerly row, suggesting that they were to be reserved for the bellringers. I suppose that it would be a very unusual bellringer today who attended services as well.

There are a couple of more ancient survivals. Firstly, the screen into the south aisle chapel is original, and partitioned off the 15th century Felton chantry. Secondly, dating from 1622, there is an unusual mural in the vestry, to the north of the chancel. It was done when this was the north aisle chapel, to show the family tree of Edens. Each conjunction is depicted by heraldic shields, with roundels for names beneath. Mortlock thought that the writing had faded, but I don't think they were ever filled in. Look closely, and you'll see the marks made by the compass point of the 17th century mason who did the work. Outside, you'll find one of these compasses depicted among other masonic tools on a grave stone, to the north of the tower. Much destruction occurred in this church in the 1660s. It had been (like so many) used for purposes other than worship during the Puritan Commonwealth, and continued in use as a prison after the Restoration. That so much has survived is remarkable, under the circumstances.







Christchurch URC, School Street, Sudbury

Christ Church is a large town centre church that has simple internal features but which can easily seat up to 300 people thanks to its balcony. The side aisles and multiple hardwood pews are ideal for decoration with flowers. There is a superb Connica organ, and one of a range of proficient local organists may be engaged to enhance the ceremony. We have a substantial hall, side room, and kitchen facilities, which may be suitable for your reception. The building has disabled access, and a loop system for the hard of hearing



**Stour Valley Vineyard, Christopher Centre,
10 Gainsborough Street, Sudbury**



Andrew and Emma moved to south Suffolk in the summer of 2005. They had been living in West London since Andrew had finished his degree at London School of Theology in 1995.

He was an intern and later an Assistant Pastor with Riverside Vineyard Church, before joining the leadership team with an Anglican church plant in St Margaret's Twickenham in 2000. Life was good. Andrew was near Chelsea football ground, so all was well with the world.

So why did they move to Suffolk?



Pastors, Andrew & Emma Stewart-Darling

In Andrew's own words:

"One day I was reading a newspaper when a small article jumped out and hit me between the eyes."Church attendance declines in the countryside by a third in the last 10 years". It rocked me, not least because Christianity seemed to be doing alright in my own suburban area with a wide variety of small, medium and big churches. I heard a small voice inside of me say, "Who will go?"

At the time I thought, "Dunno" and read on. But those words wouldn't shift from my mind and no amount of retail therapy, football and red wine would dispel them. In fact, they began to irritate me, as we were quite happy in Twickenham. As we sensed there was more to them we began to explore future ministry directions. I was thrown into considering rural church planting, which as far as this West Londoner was concerned was surprising, to put it mildly.

To cap it all, in 2005 we both had the same dream one Saturday night that they were living in a place called Sudbury. Considering I never get dreams of this nature I thought, "Maybe God is trying to tell us something!"

We quickly sold up and moved by the summer of that year.

We spent the subsequent two years praying, planning and talking to lots of people about what kind of church they might like to see. Our own vision began to quickly form: to plant and grow vibrant Christian communities in the Stour Valley area, bringing hope and healing in Jesus' name, because God cares about ordinary lives.

There is one verse that particularly sums up our aspirations for Stour Valley Vineyard Church. "To love God with all our hearts, souls, minds and strength; and to love our neighbours as ourselves." (Deuteronomy. 6:4)

Of course, the best part of the story is still to be written and they hope you might considering being part of it."

Andrew And Emma were commissioned to start Stour Valley Vineyard Church on 9th September 2007. The church is affiliated to Vineyard Churches UK and Ireland, as well as part of the worldwide Vineyard movement.





St Peter's, Market Hill, Sudbury



It is very noticable how the place has smartened itself up over the last ten years or so - in the final decade of the 20th Century it had become run down. Increasingly, you see visitors exploring the streets. Perhaps they are using the town as a base for trips to Long Melford, Lavenham and the like, but there is much here of interest as well, and the town increasingly courts tourism. There are excellent surviving buildings from the medieval period onwards, and Saturday's market is still one of the busiest in the county. Towering over it is the town's most prominent building, St Peter's church. St Peter is one of three medieval churches in the town centre.

In fact, it was not built as a parish church, but as a chapel of ease to St Gregory, a few hundred yards off beside the river. It assumed parish status after the Reformation, but the two parishes were later again combined, and St Peter was declared redundant in 1972. Outside, there stands a statue of Sudbury's most famous son, Thomas Gainsborough, although the Gainsboroughs themselves worshipped at Sudbury's third medieval church, All Saints, where you'll find their mausoleum.

The outside of St Peter is rather curious, the aisles tapering towards the east, a reminder that this church was severely hemmed in by houses and shops until the 20th century. This is one of those churches that presents us with a complete rebuilding of the 15th Century, as at near neighbours Lavenham and Long Melford. Although not as grand as either of those, it is evidence of the wealth of the cloth industry in this area. St Gregory and All Saints were also rebuilt, but evidence of earlier churches survives there. Not so here. The aisles extend westwards, creating the familiar frontage to the Market Hill. St Peter is a stately ship of a building, and I think this is as fine a setting as that of any urban church in the county. The Churches Conservation Trust does an excellent job in maintaining it in all its glory.

There was an important 19th century restoration here at the hands of William Butterfield, one of his last works before the triumph of All Saints Margaret Street. His is the chancel and with its splendid reredos, as well as the interior of the south aisle chapel. The font was moved into the south aisle to create a grand processional vista from the west door. This was one of Suffolk's Anglo-catholic shrines, and the ghosts of Butterfield and his kind are never far away. The font has a grand cover, with a lantern top. There is a story that the font was removed during the Puritan era to be used as a feeding bowl for pigs.

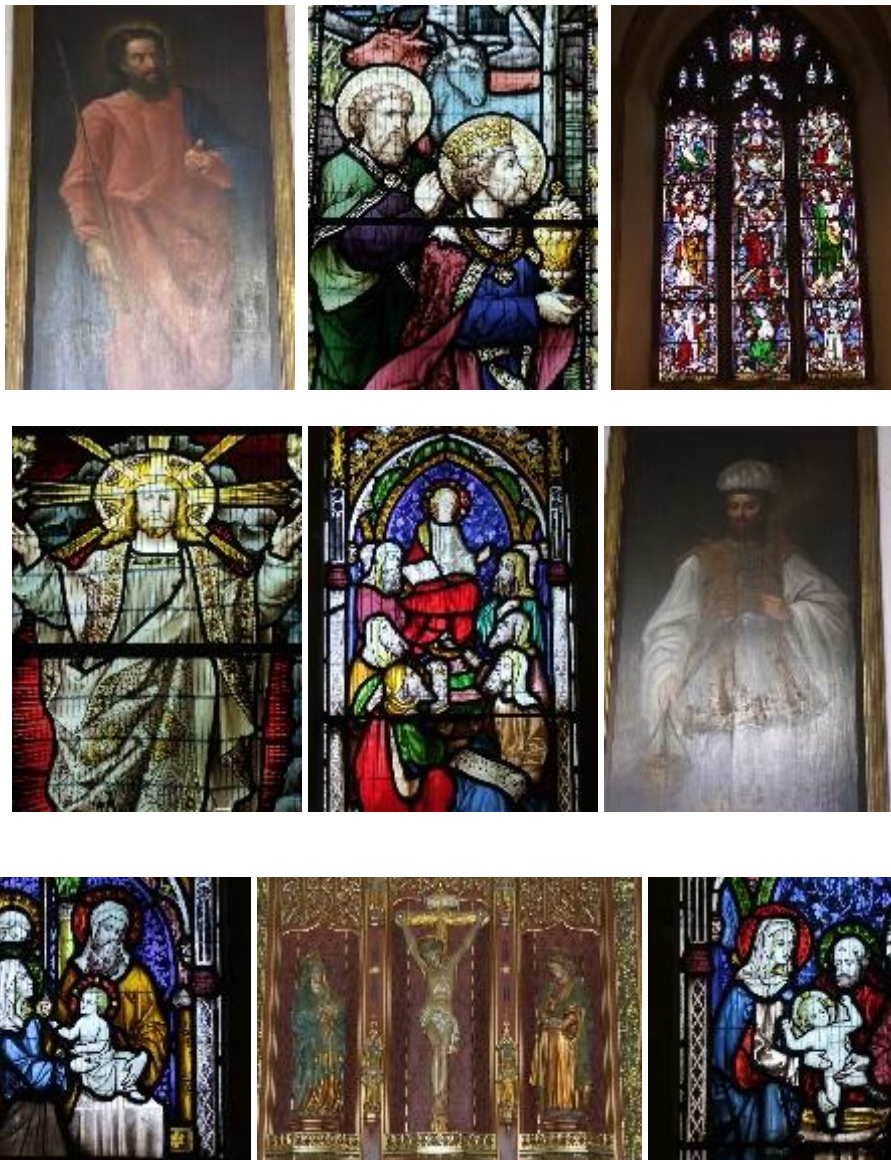
Butterfield used the surviving medieval evidence at St Gregory to design an elaborate canopy of honour, although perhaps he was overwriting medieval evidence himself. Along the eastern edge of the modern ceiling is written *Bread of Life, Cup of Blessing, Precious Blood, poured for man, upon the Rood, Alleluia Alleluia*. Towards the west end of the nave, fine 18th century portraits of Moses and Aaron survive, from the former decalogue sequence.

This would have been at the east end before Butterfield got to work. Having congratulated the Churches Conservation Trust for their oversight of St Peter, I must also say that this is one of the hardest CCT churches to visit, which is pretty scandalous given the prominence of its location. The church is kept locked, and there is no longer a keyholder

The building is only accessible when it is in use for concerts, craft sales and the like. Butterfield's chancel and chancel aisle are both now cordoned off by heavy curtains, the chapel almost inaccessible because of stacked chairs.

It is often said on this site that alternative uses need to be found for our historic buildings, so it is supposed that it can hardly complain about the sometimes ignominious uses to which St Peter is put. But given Sudbury's increasing emphasis on itself as a tourist destination, surely more might be made of St Peter?

The joint parish of St Gregory and St Peter had a school about halfway between the two churches, on North Street. It was demolished in the early 1990s, and is now a car park. But the elaborate gateway survives, as well as the grooves dug with coins into the bricks by generations of bored schoolchildren. Ghosts too, of a kind.





Independent Evangelical, Suffolk Road, Sudbury

Suffolk Road church is a friendly; family orientated Evangelical church located in Sudbury, Suffolk UK. As a church we have a great time meeting together to worship God, to learn together and to help by serving others: in the church, locally in Sudbury and all over the world.





St John's Methodist, York Road, Sudbury

St. John's Methodist Church Sudbury is part of the world wide Methodist Church, and is in the Bury St. Edmunds Circuit in East Anglia. There are twelve churches in the Circuit around the Bury St. Edmunds, Sudbury and Stowmarket areas. The Circuit has three ministers and a community worker based within the Stowmarket section.

The minister at St. John's is Rev John Boardman. Working in the Circuit is Rev. Debbie Borda (Superintendent Minister).

We are pleased to be a Fairtrade church - promoting goods which offer a fair price to their producers in developing countries. We use Fairtrade tea and coffee on the church premises, and there is a Traidcraft stall twice a month after the Sunday morning service (please see the Services/Diary page within this site for more details).

St. John's takes an active part in Churches Together in Sudbury and District - for more information on Churches Together, have a look at the CTiS&D website - <http://churchestogetherinsudbury.org.uk/>.

Mission Statement

St. John's invites you to share the good news of God's love in Christ. We welcome everyone and set out to give service to the community near and far.

Worship at St. John's



Worship takes place at St. John's every Sunday at 10.30am, and is an opportunity to share with others, praising and thanking God for all He is and does; to listen to His word and learn how he sent his son, Jesus Christ, to show us how to love. We expect to be challenged to respond to all we have heard. Our music is led by the choir, an organ, piano, and sometimes a music group. We use our own songbook with nearly 200 worship songs in addition to Singing the Faith and Hymns and Psalms. We have a Loop system in place for those who are hard of hearing. The children and young people leave part way through the service, and go to their own activities in the hall. Usually, once a month we have a service when people of all ages come together to worship. The young people are frequently invited to take more active roles within the service during these times of worship. Twice a month there are communion services.

After every service refreshments are served in the hall, and all are invited to share these. We often have a Fairtrade stall where fairly traded goods can be bought.

Groups at St. John's

Within the church, there are several smaller communities who meet regularly. These vary from groups for children (toddlers up to and including teens), to a healing group, sports groups, hobbies groups, house groups and much much more. For more information, please go to the Services/Diary page within this site.

Sudbury

Sudbury is a small, ancient market town, which dates back to Saxon times. It is found in the county of Suffolk, on the River Stour, 15 miles from Colchester and 60 miles from London. For centuries the weaving and silk industry has prospered here and many great houses and churches have been built. It has been used for television locations, most significantly for BBC's Lovejoy. Sudbury is surrounded by attractive countryside often painted by Constable and Gainsborough, and also by quintessentially English villages, such as Long Melford.

Sudbury is centered around the Market Hill and North Street, with the town hall close to their meeting place, and opposite St Peter's church. At the side of the church is the (real) drinking trough where the 101 Dalmatians took a drink when they crossed into Suffolk. In front of St Peter's church is the statue of Thomas Gainsborough which overlooks the market place. For more information, please go to the Sudbury homepage, look at the Wikipedia entry for Sudbury, or go to the Chamber of Commerce Sudbury website.

History of the Methodist Church in Sudbury

1863 - Foundation Stone laid for Primitive Methodist Chapel in Gregory Street (now the Apostolic Church)

1800's - Wesleyan Society meet in North Street Hall

1897 - Land at the corner of York Road and Melford Road purchased at auction on 7th December for £240

1901 - Foundation Stone laid for the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Melford Road (now St. John's Methodist Church)

1902 - Wesleyan Methodist Church opened April 10th

1932 - Uniting of Primitive and Wesleyan Congregations to worship at St. John's Methodist Church

1933 - Foundation stone laid for the new Sunday School Hall at St. John's

1934 - St. John's new Sunday School Hall opened

1964 - The Sudbury Circuit amalgamated with that of Bury St. Edmunds and became The Methodist Church Bury St. Edmunds and Sudbury Circuit (today known as The Methodist Church Bury St. Edmunds Circuit)

1993 - Extension of the Church Hall and the building of The Link completed and re-named St. John's Community Centre

2002 - St. John's celebrated its first centenary and looks forward to continuing its presence in Sudbury by working together with other congregations in Sudbury and District to worship God and witness to Jesus Christ within the community through effective use of people and property, time, skills and money.



**Our Lady Immaculate & St John the Evangelist,
Roman Catholic, The Croft, Sudbury**

As at Stowmarket, the catalyst for the 19th century Catholic revival in Sudbury was a former Anglican, who had been received into the Catholic Church. Before the

Reformation, Catholic priests had ministered at three churches in the town, St Gregory, St Peter, and All Saints.

But the fiery wind of the Reformation swept these into the possession of the Church of England; today, St Peter stands redundant on the Market Hill, and the town is divided between the other two Anglican parishes. It was in the shadow of one of these, All Saints, that John Flowers and his wife Esther ran their grocery shop. They suffered broken windows and abuse, because they also sold Catholic books and devotional items.

At this time, Sudbury Catholics had to make the 15 mile round trip to Lawshall and back to attend Mass. So, the Flowers converted their front room into a chapel, and arranged with the Bishop of Northampton that the priest from Lawshall should come once a month, to celebrate Mass in the town.

The first Mass is recorded as having taken place on 7th November 1876. The Priest, Father Rogers, usually came on a Saturday night, heard confessions, baptised babies, stayed over at the Flowers' house, and said Mass on the Sunday morning.

Gradually, the congregation grew, as the Catholics of Sudbury became more organised. One of their number was John Kelly, who lived in a house on the Croft, a large open green beside the River Stour, opposite St Gregory. He fell ill, and was nursed by Sisters of the Sacred Heart.

When he died, he left his house, Willow Cottage, to the order. It is still their home today. They started a school in it, and with part of a bequest two further cottages were bought, on the other side of the Croft. In one, the walls were knocked through to form a chapel. The other became the presbytery for Father Valerius D'Apreda, Sudbury's first Catholic priest since the Reformation.

The industrialisation of the town had led to an influx of Catholics, and the little chapel soon proved wholly inadequate. Funds were raised, and, in 1893 the church of Our Lady and St John was erected. The architect was Leonard Stokes and he produced what is probably Suffolk's prettiest building of that decade, a delicate jewel in a perfect setting.

It is typical of his work, including a spirelet on the little bell-turret, and white banding in the red brick. That it looks the work of a decade later is testimony to the influence of his work.

As you approach the church across the Croft, you might hear the carillon of bells ring out above the images of the Risen Christ flanked by the Blessed Virgin and St John.

You step into a narthex porch, and then turn right into the middle of the nave. Here, there is the shrine to Our Lady of Sudbury which had been next door in St Gregory before being destroyed in the 1530s. It was restored here at Our Lady and St John almost exactly 400 years later.



The post-Vatican II reordering of Our Lady and St John has been reasonably successful, the chancel being simplified, but still retaining a sense of grandeur. Rather less happy are other alterations, made in recent years to increase capacity. The body of the nave has been filled with a balcony, which wholly disrupts the view westwards, and is quite out of keeping with Stokes' delicate architecture. And, ironically, the church still isn't really big enough.

As Catholic church attendances in East Anglia rise through the roof, it is small, older churches like this one which suffer from the squeeze. If Our Lady and St John was a 1950s hut, then the parish could cheerfully demolish it and build something new, but that is not an option here in Sudbury. Fortunately, the parish has an extremely hard-working Priest. I was here on the Sunday after Christmas a while back, a day when congregations are notoriously diminished, and there simply wasn't room to move. Three years ago, I was here for the Easter Vigil - there were so many people, you could hardly breathe.



Whatever must worshippers think when they step outside and see the massive bulk of the medieval St Gregory, the glory that was once theirs?

I have referred to the excellent history of the parish by May Clayton (1989) in my preparation of this entry.





St Gregory's, Gregory Street, Sudbury



Among Suffolk's smaller towns, Sudbury is the biggest. Until the 19th century, it was the county's third largest town, but industrial development elsewhere has left it behind. It still seems bigger than the official population suggests, since it embraces Great Cornard, Long Melford and Chilton within its built-up area, and you can visit six fine medieval churches here without travelling through fields.



Three of these churches are in Sudbury itself, and Sudbury is the only town in Suffolk outside Ipswich and Bury where the town centre was divided up into separate parishes, a mark of the medieval prosperity of this place. All of them are substantial, all of them are interesting. All of them are over-restored, and as the mother church of Sudbury, St Gregory has suffered more than most.

All Saints lies to the south of the town, and St Peter is on the market place. Until the Reformation, it was a chapel of ease to St Gregory, before being given its own parish, until redundancy came calling in the 1970s. All Saints and St Peter both have wholly urban settings, hemmed in by shops and housing. But St Gregory's aspect has been revealed by the construction of the ring road, which necessitated demolition of many houses in Gregory Street and Croft Street. With the Croft, a large grassed area leading down to the River Stour, and Leonard Stoke's jewel-like 1890 Church of Our Lady and St John beside it, St Gregory has a lovely setting.

It looks grand from a distance. Close up, it is a large and rather battered old lady. The lower parts of some windows are bricked up, probably an attempt to conserve heat when the church was a preaching house, so that people could endure the long sermons without freezing. The same thing can be seen at Blythburgh. The tower has a stair turret rising above the battlements, in the approved Stour Valley manner. A bequest of 1446 left the money for its construction.

The best approach is from the south, along the line of Gregory Street. Once past the rather alarming war memorial, we enter the graveyard through an avenue leading to the great south porch, contemporary with its clerestory above. The shape is similar to nearby Glemsford, except that here the porch and south chapel are combined, built together. The chapel is flush with the southern entrance to the porch, unlike the same at Stonham Parva, where intruding buttresses reveal that they were built separately.

The chapel formerly contained the shrine of Our Lady of Sudbury; this has been restored recently, four centuries after its destruction, by the adjacent Catholic church. There seems to be a good relationship between these two churches, incidentally; on several occasions recently, St Gregory has been used by the Catholic congregation, who no longer fit into their own church.

This is perhaps the grandest entrance to any Suffolk church, and you step into an interior which is rather pleasingly shabby; one is so used to Stour Valley Perpendicular being trim and shipshape, but here the patina of age survives, as well as a sense of continuity of use. Directly ahead of you is the magnificent font cover, much recoloured, and with its statues replaced. If those at Ufford and Southwold did not exist, it would seem grander. The 19th century restoration here was under the great William Butterfield, his best work in the county. There is a fine sequence of late 19th and early 20th century Saints in the nave windows, which are imposing without being overwhelming.



Look out for the talbot badge here and outside - this dog, similar to a modern greyhound, is the symbol of a rather unsavoury character called Simon of Sudbury, of whom more in a moment. The dado of the roodscreen survives; unfortunately, it has been completely repainted with sentimental early 20th century figures. Other repaintings include the chancel roof and canopy of honour, which are both splendid and memorable. They are done well, and the respect for continuity is like that at Southwold, albeit on a smaller scale.

In contrast to this enthusiasm are the fine medieval benches in the chancel. They are one of the few survivals of the earlier medieval church, before the cloth industry wealth of this town in the 15th century led to the almost complete rebuilding of St Gregory. The earlier church was the work of Simon of Sudbury, Archbishop of Canterbury and Lord Chancellor of all England. His association with this church ended in a traumatic way, as we shall see. The south arcade also survives from his church, completed in the year before his death.

St Gregory has two great survivals, one of which is on permanent display, and the other viewable by appointment.



The first is a single unrestored panel from the rood screen. The reason it is exciting is that it shows Sir John Schorn, who, legend has it, conjured the devil into a boot. Schorn was invoked in prayers for the lame, but was never officially recognised as a Saint by the Catholic Church. His elevation to intercessory status was not unique, for the same was true in medieval times of others, including Bede and Henry VI. For many years, this panel was in the local museum, but it has now been returned, and can be seen attached to the south chancel wall.

The other relic is the mummified head of the aforementioned Simon of Sudbury, the vile architect of the Poll Tax when he was Lord Chancellor in 1380. In 1381, the peasants revolted, and along with that most unpopular of English Kings, Richard II, he took refuge in the Tower of London, where he was messily beheaded by a lynch mob. That this head is no longer attached to a body is a mark of the anger against him. The head is kept in a glass case, but they'll show it to you if you ask nicely.

He founded a College of Canons in 1365 and rebuilt the chancel to accommodate them. He co-founded it with his brother John. The college was a secular College of Canons, dedicated to St Gregory, and the church, which had formerly been in the gift of Nuneaton Priory, became the collegiate church. If you step through the gateway to the west of the church, the buildings in front of you are the former Union Workhouse of the 1820s - this was the site of the College, and supposedly the cellars survive under the workhouse, now private houses.

The Collegiate body consisted of a Warden (later known as Master), five secular Canons, and three chaplains (later known as Fellows). The secular canons would act as Priests; probably, those who were not acting in a parochial role were mostly saying Masses for the dead - Simon de Sudbury and his brother John had the All Souls chapel built at St Gregory for Masses to be said for their parents. But also, remember that St Gregory was the main parish church of the town.

There was no Rector of St Gregory - the College itself owned the Rectory, deriving tithes for its own purposes, and had to provide the expected sacramental activities. The Chaplains would, as the name suggests, perhaps have been responsible for the chapels (As well as St Peter, there was another chapel of ease at St Bartholomew on the road to Melford).

There was always plenty of work to do in the English Catholic church - one wonders how any large churches survived without a college! - and it is little wonder that the Reformation, and the switch to Anglican congregational worship, put an end to them. Nothing now remains. I am afraid that the ornate gateway is not from the college - it is modern, although it does bear the arms of Simon de Sudbury.

You might notice that there is a statue of a Bishop on the adjacent Croft, and this might lead you to think that Sudbury was proud of its wayward son Simon.

In fact, this statue is Bishop Aelfhun, who died in Sudbury in 798. Stephen Hough tells me that the mention of this death in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* is the first time that the placename 'Sudbury' is recorded.

St Gregory is a grand, urban church, but it is rather more than that. Here, the sense of continuity and the story of Suffolk down the long generations is as resonant as any feeling of civic pride.



And once again, this is the main church of Sudbury, because St Gregory parish has now subsumed that of St Peter in the market place, which was declared redundant in the early 1970s.

Even so, you can't help thinking that the congregation must rattle around in this great space.





Living Waters Fellowship, Gregory Street, Sudbury

Although we do not know the date, we know the year was in 1965 that Brother Jim Hayes and his wife Martha moved to Sudbury Suffolk, leaving the assembly in Chiswick London. To start building an assembly in the birth town the artists Gainsborough, which is on the edge of Constable Country.

During the coming months a small group of believers meet in the Home of Brother David Perry. Finding a location for the Churches regular meetings came in 1965 when they rented the back room of the local Liberal Party Hall (ex Primitive Methodist). After many years of Pentecostal ministry in Sudbury, having changed pastors several times and following many other assemblies we changed the name in 2007 to Living Waters Fellowship. The emphasis being that of the Holy Spirit flowing during all services (John 7; 38). Since this time we have seen the power of God move in miraculous ways from some giving up drink and drugs, to Healings from cancer. In 2014 we celebrated 50yrs of God's word being spoken over Sudbury. This service included of a plaque to Past Jim Hays and his wife Martha who are still an active members of the fellowship. And Yes we still provide a splendid meal, as we open two days a week to provide a hot meal to those in need.



St Andrew's, Church Road, Great Cornard

St Andrew's is a warm, relaxed and welcoming parish church, in Great Cornard near Sudbury, Suffolk. Our worship is centred around the Eucharist. Our mission statement says that we are here to, "Love God and the Lord Jesus Christ, and to share and promote his love with all people - especially the people of Great Cornard." We work hard to reach out to our community with love and open our doors as wide as we can to welcome people in. We have a brilliant choir, with loads of children - music is very important in our worship. We look forward to welcoming you on Sundays or Friday mornings