



**CHURCHES VISITED AND REVISITED
(17/12/16 TO DATE) – BOOK 37**





St Peter's, Market Hill, Sudbury

Standing proudly at the head of Market Hill in the heart of Sudbury, St Peter's has a wealth of heritage, dating back to the 14th Century. This beautiful, Grade I listed building and former Anglican church is currently maintained and managed by registered charity the Friends of St Peter's, and national charity the Churches Conservation Trust. St Peter's is maintained with the aim of: *"Preserving the building and providing facilities in the interest of social welfare for the recreation and leisure time occupation of the inhabitants of Sudbury and district"* All those involved with St Peter's uphold the aims of preserving the heritage of the building, whilst ensuring it is used and maintained for years to come.

1180 – A previous church on the site was mentioned but the building that we see today grew slowly during the 14th and 15th centuries funded by the local guilds and the townsfolk.

1376 – Perhaps the finest glory of the building externally is the superb tower. In a will dated 1376, reference is made to the great bell in St Peter's Chapel.

1874 – The first clock was made by Henry Pleasant, the local bell founder. The present four faced clock uses the mechanism installed by Messrs. Gillett and Bland of Croydon in 1874. It is the third clock to be installed in the tower and is now driven electronically.

1971 – St Peter' was declared redundant as a church, so came into being the Friends of St Peter, a registered charity, with the two aims of preserving the building and providing facilities in the interest of social welfare for the recreation and leisure time occupation of the inhabitants of Sudbury and District.

1976 – On 29th May 1976, the building was vested to the body now known as the Churches Conservation Trust with the friends acting as local agents. The Churches Conservation Trust with support from the friends, have spent many thousands of pounds in maintaining the fabric of the church which has enabled this beautiful and historic building to remain standing at the heart of the town.



Grace Baptist, New Street, Sudbury



St Gregory's, Gregory Street, Sudbury



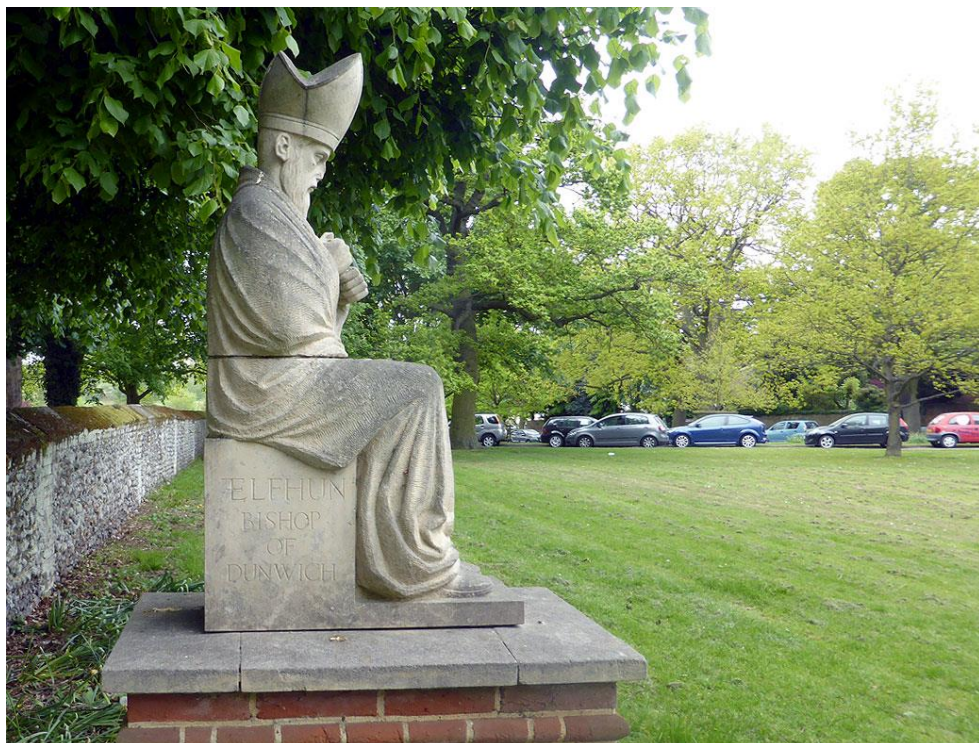
Our Lady Immaculate and nearby statute, Gregory Street, Sudbury



St Gregory's, Gregory Street, Sudbury



St Gregory's Church was named after Gregory the Great who was Pope from 590 – 604 AD and the first account of a church can be found in two wills dated 970 and 993. Although no specific mention of St Gregory's can be found before then,



Alfwin, Bishop of Dunwich died in Sudbury so it can be assumed there was a church there at the time. Before 1066 the Manor of Sudbury belonged to Earl Morcar and the Domesday Book records that St Gregory's church possessed 50 acres of arable land and 25 of meadows. After the Earl's death it was given to the Earl of Gloucester, the youngest son of William the Conqueror. It then passed through the female line to the de Clare family. In the 12th century Amicia de Clare gave advowson (the right of bestowal of a benefice), to the nuns of Eaton in Warwickshire in whose gift it remained until 1374. Simon of Sudbury, then Bishop of London, and his brother John acquired the advowson and gave it to the fellow and Wardens of the college they were founding. The North Aisle in the present church was built about 1370 and the south aisle about 100 years later. The Chancel is in the late perpendicular period (1400 – 1500) and unusually long. There are 20 15th century oak choir stalls with miserere seat – probably to provide seating for the collegiate body.

All that remains of the rood screen is the lower panels with figures of Saints painted in the middle 19th century. In 1860 the church authorities pronounced St Gregory's church to be "in very serious decay" and closed it for a while as being dangerous. Mr W Butterfield was commissioned to carry out the restoration.



The tower originally had a peal of six bells but two were added later and in 1821 five of them were replaced. The tower itself was restored in 1978.



The font has an ancient cover from the time of Henry V1. The lofty spire rises in stages to about 3.6 metres (12 feet) and still has its original red and gold paint. The lowest part can be pushed up in a telescopic manner so that the font can be used.



The oak pulpit was given in 1925 by Mr Worthington Church to replace the old, damaged one.

In the vestry is the head of Simon of Sudbury who was executed in 1381.

At the East end of the North Aisle is a slab said to be the resting place of the parents of Simon, Nigel and Sara Theobald. Another slab, with a figure of a Bishop with pastoral staff, is probably for Thomas Jane, Bishop of Norwich, who was buried at St Gregory's Church in 1500.

The south porch is unusually large and under the same roof as the porch is the Chapel of St Anne.





Christchurch, School Road, Sudbury



Living Water Fellowship, Gregory Street Sudbury



In the distance is All Saints in Church Street, Sudbury

All Saints' was originally a Norman flint and rubble church, built for the new parish created in the south-western corner of the town at the time of the growing wool trade to serve the thriving centre of commerce and industry which Sudbury had become. The ford crossing the River Stour was quickly replaced by a bridge and a small chapel and dorter, long since demolished, was established on Ballingdon Hill as a respite for travellers. In 1150 the church and the chapel with their lands were bought by Adam the Monk for the Abbey at St. Albans, in whose gift it remained until the Dissolution, when Thomas Eden, Clerk of the Star Chamber, became patron of the living in 1551.

The church was rebuilt in the early 1300's in the decorated style (1280 – 1380) and again in the 15th century, principally in the perpendicular style (1375 – 1550) leaving only the chancel from the previous structure. At this time Sudbury was as important a town as Colchester and Norwich and extremely prosperous having three fine churches within its bounds – rare for so small a town.



The perpendicular style tower is supported by three elegant angle buttresses with the stair turret on the south eastern corner. The clear tones of the eight bells escape through four large belfry windows. Excellent views of Sudbury and the water meadows can be seen from the top of the tower from between the stepped battlements. The huge West window is above the West doors with their finely carved tracery panels. Continuing to the north into the grave yard, the Gainsborough family tomb is easily found. Thomas Gainsborough, the artist, was born in Sudbury but he is not buried in the family mausoleum, preferring a more modest plain gravestone at St. Anne's Church, Kew.



All Saints, Church Street, Sudbury





Baptist, Church Street, Sudbury



Christian Fellowship and St Andrew's, Great Cornard (from the bus)



Baptist and St Mary's, Bures (from the bus)



St Mary's, Bures (from the bus)

FRIDAY 14th JUNE 2019



St Peter and St Paul, Birch (from the bus)



The church of St Peter and St Paul in the quiet village of Birch has stood empty for more than 24 years. Due this extended period of neglect, the church is now derelict and the Diocese of Chelmsford wish to demolish it. The Trust is campaigning to save the building and has completed a viability study which would save the property by converting most of the building into a family home.





St Mary's, Church Street, Tollesbury

In Mediaeval times the parish church was the property of Saint Mary's nunnery at Barking, the nunnery was responsible for the appointment of the clergyman to the parish. When the nunnery was dissolved by Henry VIII in 1539, the manor was given to Thomas, Lord Cromwell a few days before he was made Earl of Essex. The gift of the living has passed through many hands, and now rests with Exeter College, Oxford and the Bishop of Chelmsford.

The tower of the church is a most imposing structure and it may well be that here was a place of refuge for parishioners in time of attack from marauders across the North Sea. The lowest stage of the tower dates from the 11th Century and consists of rubble, flint and conglomerite walling with freestone quoins. The doorway is typical of the Tudor period. Above this stage are two more windows with 15th Century brickwork. The largest window in the tower is in the perpendicular style and the highest windows of brick were shaped in Tudor times. The tower is capped by parapet walls and pinnacles dating from the 17th Century. Buttresses are made from flint and brick.

Moving towards the south porch which was added at the time of the restoration of 1872, one can see that the nave, like the base of the tower, dates from the 11th Century and is made of similar material. In this south wall, closest to the tower is a narrow window dating from Norman times. To the east, on the other side of the porch is a large perpendicular window and a further small window of similar style. The nave is strengthened by angled brick buttresses

The chancel, added at the same time as the south porch has two single light windows on its north and south sides and a large four light window to the east. This window is in the decorated style with quatrefoils.

On the north side of the nave is a brick buttress to the chancel, and windows which correspond to those on the other side. High in this wall, to the east of the vestry roof are the outlines of two of the original lancet type windows now blocked up. The modern vestry was added in 1955. On the north side of the nave is a brick buttress to the chancel, and windows which correspond to those on the other side. High in this wall, to the east of the vestry roof are the outlines of two of the original lancet type windows now blocked up. The modern vestry was added in 1955. Inside the church and turning to look back at the porch a splay of brickwork is exposed. This was shaped in the 11th Century and consists entirely of bricks made by the Romans. A similar splay can be seen above the tower arch. High in the wall near the tower is the small Norman window with glass depicting George, England's patron saint. It is given in memory as the tablet below tells, of Major William Charles Maskell, DSO, MC, who died in France in 1918.

The glass in the 15th Century window nearby is modern. This window has three cinquefoiled lights with vertical transformed tracery in a two centred head. The glass causes it now to be known as 'The Seafarers Window', and it is intended to place on permanent record the close association between the village and the sea. The centre light shows a post resurrection appearance of Christ to his apostles, as recorded in Saint John 21, 1-13. In the left hand light are depicted four of the famous yachts that have contended for the 'The Americas Cup', yacht racing's premier trophy. Yachtsmen from the Colne and Blackwater districts have been intimately connected with it since the initial race in 1851. Indeed, men of Tollesbury participated in fifteen of the sixteen British contenders until 'Endeavour II'; the last 'Shamrock' and the two 'Endeavour' yachts were skippered by Captain Ted Heard of Tollesbury. Top left is the schooner 'America' which first won the historic race around the Isle of Wight. Second from the top is the schooner 'Cambria' which contended in 1870; third from top is 'Shamrock II' the challenger in 1899; and bottom is 'Endeavour I'. In the right hand light are to be seen the coastal vessels that plied the Essex waters. Top right is a Billy Boy; second from the top a ketch rigged barge; third is a 'Stackie', especially built to carry straw and hay to London; and bottom right is a Tollesbury oyster smack showing the rig of about 1922.

The window was given by Mr. F E Hasler of New York and was dedicated on November 26th 1963, by the Revd. Stephen Bayne, the then Executive Officer of the Anglican Communion. It was designed by Mr. Derek Wilson. Close by and over the vestry door is a reproduction of a painting by an Italian master, of Saint Michael. It hangs in a position where traditionally in churches a picture of Saint Christopher was to be seen. Christopher, the patron saint of travellers, was often portrayed in mediaeval times on the wall opposite the church entrance. Any pilgrim or journeyman who saw him could feel safe from robbery or attack during the course of that day. A little further on is the pulpit, unusually of chestnut. In part painted gilt and black, it is also adorned with green fleur-de-lis and roses. The word pulpit comes from the Latin 'pulpitum', meaning platform, and was the elevated spot from which the minister preached the word of God in the Bible. Originally it was a moveable piece of furniture and could be taken to any convenient part of the church, out of the wind and, before the introduction of glass, in the chancel, on the north wall, is the memorial to Jane (Kempe), died 1654, wife of Thomas Gardiner. It is a roughly carved veined marble tablet with pediment and four shields of arms, upon which the paint is now very faint.

On the opposite side of the chancel is another marble tablet, this being to John Harris, a former vicar of the parish, who died in 1734. Between these two tablets is the fine east window which dates from 1902 and is the work of Charles Kempe, 1837 - 1907. It is appropriate that as the church is dedicated to Saint Mary the Virgin, the window should deal with the Annunciation and the Nativity of Jesus. The panels therefore show Gabriel, Mary, adoring shepherds, the Holy Family and angels. Beneath this window and behind the altar is the reredos of wood, painted in gilt, blue and red. It shows Christ in glory, with adoring angels. This was erected in 1938 in memory of Alice Carter, wife of a former vicar, and was painted by Christopher Webb. Whilst the altar and altar rails of wood are not in themselves particularly noteworthy, the general history of such pieces of church furniture may be of some interest. All Christian altars were originally made of stone. They were known as 'Mensa', this being the Latin word for table. The consecration of the mensa usually took place at the same time as the consecration of the church, and the bishop performing the ceremony would touch the stone five times, once at each corner and once in the centre. At these spots, a cross was cut into the stone to remind people of the five wounds Christ suffered on the Cross.

All altar rails used to be far more solid than many which are seen today. Today they are for use of the communicants who kneel at them to receive Holy Communion. Originally they were more definite barriers to stop dogs profaning the Holy table, that being the primary purpose of their introduction. Looking left, at the foot of the chancel steps are memorials to two past vicars. The oak lectern was made by Mabbitt's woodcarvers of Danbury and is in memory of the Revd. William Carter, vicar 1901 - 1941. The carving of the plough and sail link the church to the traditional occupations of the village. The organ is in memory of his predecessor, the Revd. J. Battersby, vicar 1857 - 1900. It was built by Arnold's of Thaxted and given in 1935. To the left of the organ, set in its original, now upright stone is a brass of Thomas Freshwater showing him dressed in a fur lined gown. His wife Margaret is also to be seen and she has the pedimental head-dress of the time. There is a group of nine daughters and indents for their two sons and an inscription reads, "Pray for the Soules of Thomas Freshwater and Margaret his wife. On 15 Dec 1517". On the other side of the organ in the south wall of the nave is a small doorway which is now blocked up. Hundreds of years ago this door led to the rood loft.

The presence of this doorway is evidence that at one time there was a wooden screen separating the nave from the chancel. On this was the rood loft of wood. This was a platform which accommodated the choir or instrumentalists. At the front of this platform was the great Rood or Crucifix. On either side would have been the figures of Saint Mary the Virgin and Saint John the Evangelist, to whom Jesus spoke from the Cross. Roods are very rare, as they were one of the first parts of the churches to be destroyed at the Reformation. The font is unique and is known as the 'Swearing Font'. It bears the inscription "Good people all I pray take care that in ye Church you doe not sware As this man did". An entry in the registers for 30th August 1718 explains this unusual inscription: "Elizabeth daughter of Robert and Eliza Wood, being ye first child which was baptised in the new font which was bought out of five pounds paid by John Norman who some months before came drunk into ye Church and cursed and talked aloud in the time of Divine Service, to prevent his being prosecuted for which he paid by agreement the above said five pounds.

Note that the wise Rhymes on the font were put there by sole order of Robert Joyce then Church Warden" Baptism is always associated with a new source of life. Jesus is referred to as the Fount of Life, and a fountain is a constant source of new water. It is therefore appropriate that the Church has taken the Latin word 'fons' (a fount) and used it in connection with the ceremonial initiation of members of the Church. Towards the back of the church but before the porch is reached, is another small window. The glass portrays Saint Cedd, Bishop of the East Saxons, who brought Christianity as mentioned earlier to this part of England. In his right hand he holds the chapel of Saint Peter which he built at Bradwell. In the building here, there is another small brass, which was unearthed under some floorboards at the back of the church in 1948. It is thought to be the brass of Margaret Ranstom. In his book, "The History and Antiquities of Essex", published in 1740, Salmon mentions brasses of a figure of a man and a woman, five sons and three daughters, and the inscription: "Pray for the Soules of John Ranstom and Alys his wife. John ob 7 Dec 1510". All that now remains is the headless figure of a woman!

The tower houses a ring of ten bells, the lightest weight of such a number in the world! There is an entry in the Baptism register for the year 1633 which says: "Ye 26th day of November 1633 ye bells were hung in ye steepl". The bells were re-hung in 1967 in a new metal frame and two new trebles were added to the former six. One was given by Miss G. Coltart, the last private patron of the living, in memory of three former vicars. The work was undertaken by the Whitechapel Bell Foundry. The total was made up to ten in 1990. The earliest bell was cast in 1604 by Miles Graie, and the tenor weighing 8cwt, was cast in 1794 by T. Mears of London. The church also possesses a fine Elizabethan chalice of 1562 with three bands of incised ornament and a large plated pewter flagon of the 17th Century. The earliest record in the parish registers for Tollesbury is a Baptism on November 1558. From this date onwards the registers are almost complete. The church also owns a few pages of the Minor Prophets from the Great Bible of 1540. These were found early in the 20th Century in a chimney of the Kings Head during repairs there. Whilst Tollesbury may be off the beaten track it is nonetheless a village of much interest. The visitor is invited to pause for a few moments, and to remember it's benefactors and parish priests and to pray for the future of the Church here.



St Mary's, Church Street, Tollesbury