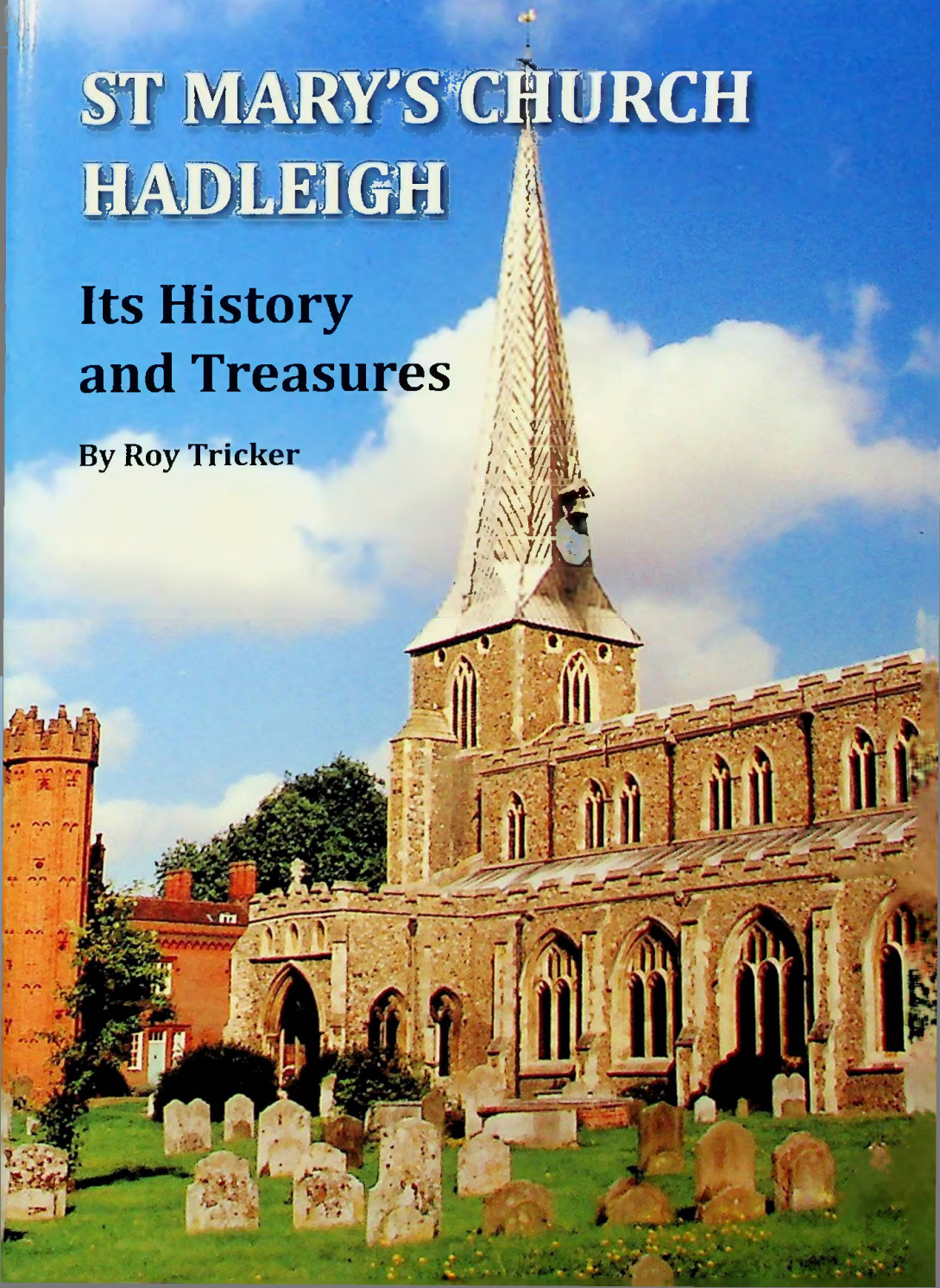


# ST MARY'S CHURCH HADLEIGH

## Its History and Treasures

By Roy Tricker



22/1/17

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## FOREWORD

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It is such a privilege to write the opening to this long-awaited book. A church building, such as this one, deserves to have a comprehensive guide which helps us to follow its long and important history. St Mary's is the fifth largest church in the county and is situated in what is well known as *Suffolk's Cathedral Square*. When you stand between the Guildhall and the church, you can see why that is.

Apart from the dramatic architecture of this stunning 'wool' church, it has been at the heart of church history in this country for hundreds of years. Previous priests built the amazing Deanery Tower; were martyred for their faith; contributed to the translation of the King James Bible; and have been integral in fresh thinking as to what it means to be Christ's Church in their time.

St Mary's is a true parish church. It is the focal point for not just those of the Christian faith, but also for the whole community.

I am delighted that Roy Tricker agreed to write this book. His style of writing makes this a living history and a joy to read. My prayer is that if you are a regular worshipper, a member of the local community or a visitor, that you will be truly blessed as you read his words and stand on holy ground - ground which has seen many feet of those who have prayed and worshipped here down through the centuries.

*The Very Reverend Martin Thrower,  
Rector of Hadleigh & Dean of Bocking*

## INTRODUCTION & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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I was delighted to be asked to research and compile a short History and Guide to this great and glorious church, which I first marvelled at as a ten-year-old church enthusiast in 1958. I approach the task as a visitor and pilgrim to St Mary's, being well aware that there are people much better qualified than I am, who have written and researched over many years.

I gladly acknowledge Dean Carter's scholarly Guide, which I purchased in 1958; also the 19th century writings of the Revd Hugh Pigot; other superb books about Hadleigh, especially *Hadleigh and the Alabaster Family* by Sue Andrews and Tony Springall and *Hadleigh through the Ages* by WAB Jones; also photographer Mike Hodges of Lavenham Photographic Studio Ltd for the contemporary photographs, and Hadleigh Archives for permission to reproduce the historical pictures.

Sue Andrews has meticulously and painstakingly read through my text and has made useful comments and corrections, as has also Roger Kennell and I am very grateful to them both, as I am also to Hilary Griffin, who first invited me to get my teeth into St Mary's and who has given me much wisdom, hospitality and fun, and to John Hall who, with Hilary, has assisted in putting everything together. Many other people have given me other encouragement and expertise, including the Very Revd Martin Thrower, and members of St Mary's Church Family.

I am indebted to the late Peter Northeast and Birkin Haward who, together with George Pipe, Cynthia Brown, Ian Coote and James Bettley have shared their specialist knowledge with me, and to the staffs of Lambeth Palace Library, Norwich Local Studies Library and the Suffolk County Record Office, for the use of material in their care.

*Roy Tricker, 2011.*

# ST MARY'S CHURCH HADLEIGH

## Its History and Treasures

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**WELCOME...** to this magnificent Suffolk church (believed to be the fifth largest in the county) in its beautiful setting at the heart of this picturesque and vibrant market town. The parish which it serves stretches some  $4\frac{1}{4}$  miles east-west and about 2 miles north-south, its eastern border also forming part of the old boundary between East and West Suffolk.

The town grew up around the River Brett, where what are now the B1070 and A1071 roads coincide. In mediaeval times Hadleigh was a thriving centre for the production of woollen cloth and was one of the wealthier towns in the county, outstripping Lavenham in cloth production and rivalling other woollen-cloth towns.

People have worshipped on this spot for at least 1,100 years and traces of Hadleigh's Saxon church were uncovered in the churchyard to the south of the porch in 1829 and in 1984. It was thought to have been built by the Danish leader, Guthrum, although there is no evidence that he built a church here. Guthrum made peace with King Alfred the Great in 878; he died and was buried here in Hadleigh in 890.

Hadleigh is a special place in several ways and not least because it has the rare distinction of being an 'Archbishop's Peculiar'. Its rector is referred to as 'the Dean' - or, properly, the Very Reverend the Dean of Bocking. In 991 Hadleigh parish was given by Brithnoth, ealdorman of Essex, to the Archbishop of Canterbury and became part of an area including Bocking, near Braintree, under the archbishop's direct jurisdiction, of which the rector of Bocking was made Dean. In 1556, rectors of Hadleigh became 'Co Deans' of Bocking and had considerable power, which included holding ecclesiastical courts. Hadleigh and Bocking were little pieces of Suffolk and Essex which were officially in the diocese of Canterbury and not responsible to the local diocesan bishop. Peculiars were abolished in 1837, when Hadleigh became part of Ely diocese and then of St Edmundsbury & Ipswich in 1914, although the rectors of Hadleigh and Bocking retain the title, as do those at other former Archbishop's peculiars at Battle (Sussex), Jersey and Guernsey.

**WELCOME TO A LIVING, WORKING BUILDING**, which is no mere museum nor ancient monument, but is still in very active use for the purpose for which it was built. It is a sermon in craftsmanship which inspires and amazes us with its beauty, made sacred by centuries of prayer and care. Here we find living history and exquisite craftsmanship from many periods, because nothing but the best was (or is) fit for the House of God.

St Mary's really is a 'gem' amongst churches. Lovers of beauty come to enjoy its unforgettable setting; ecclesiologists come to see an amazing giant of a church, built by hand; bell-lovers may hear every hour the oldest inscribed bell in Suffolk; organists may admire the remarkable organ case by Father Smith; lovers of 19th and 20th century craftsmanship see the designs of Frederick Barnes, G.E. Pritchett, J.D. Wyatt, George Fellowes-Prynne, Charles Spooner, Eric Gill and H. Munro Cautley - and so the list of St Mary's treasures continues!

**WHOEVER YOU MAY BE, PLEASE MAKE YOURSELF THOROUGHLY AT HOME HERE.**

*We hope that you will enjoy exploring the outside and the inside of this great church and that this little book will help to point you to some of its features of beauty and interest. If you wish to use this as a walk-round Guide, please turn to page 12 (exterior), page 18 (interior).*

**MAY GOD BLESS YOU**

## How Old is the Church?

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The answer to this very sensible question which visitors ask about an old church is far from simple, because our churches have evolved over the years as people of different centuries and Christian traditions have modified and beautified them and have left their mark upon them. From what we can see in the building itself and from what documentary evidence we have, the major landmarks in St Mary's long history are as follows:-

**c.878-890** - A Saxon church was built here, the remains of which have been discovered beneath the churchyard, to the south of the present porch.

**1086** - In Domesday Book, the church at 'Hetlega' was owned by Archbishop Lanfranc of Canterbury.

**The 1200s** - About this time the Saxon church was replaced by a new church to the north of it. The base of the present tower shows work of c.1200 and the upper stages gradually grew during this century, culminating in the lead-covered timber-framed spire, which is a rare and remarkable mediaeval survival, although much refurbished in 1926.

**The 1300s** - The north doorway dates from c.1320-30, as does the tomb-recess in the south aisle wall. The font was made in the late 1300s and it may well be that the cores of some of the walls may be of this date.

**The 1400s** - A major rebuilding took place as the town's woollen-cloth trade prosperity grew, resulting in the structure that we see today. The window-design and other telling features suggest that the building grew during the first half of the century, unlike the more elaborate churches like Lavenham, Long Melford and Southwold, which were a little later. A second (and smaller) embattled south porch was built partly over and to the west of the fifth window from the east, maybe to provide an entrance for the guilds from the Guildhall and latterly for civic processions. This porch, which was later crowned by a massive sundial, was taken down for safety reasons in 1855.

The rector from 1469-97 was William Pykenham, Archdeacon of Suffolk and Dean of Stoke-by-Clare College. He built what we now know as the

Deanery Tower. This was thought to be the gatehouse for a proposed grand new rectory, but is more likely a building in its own right for the archdeacon's use. He founded the almshouses in George Street, which still function, together with their delightful chapel. The gateway to the archdeacon's 'town-house' may still be seen in Northgate Street, Ipswich.

**The 1500s** - The Reformation brought about great change in our churches and it seems that Hadleigh eagerly embraced the new 'reformed' thinking. In 1539, when it became obligatory for every church to purchase and use a copy of the Bible in English, Hadleigh decided (illegally) to go one step further and to pioneer the use of English in the Mass. The Revd Rowland Taylor (rector 1544-54) was chaplain to Archbishop Cranmer and suffered for his devotion to the Reformation during Queen Mary's reign, when he was deprived of his living and burned to death on Aldham Common in 1555. [*Picture of the Rowland Taylor memorial window - see page 28.*]

His successor, the Revd John Nowell (rector 1554-60), backed Queen Mary's reversal of the Reformation and it was as a reward for his activities that the rectors of Hadleigh became also Deans of Bocking.

**The 1600s** - In 1618 began the 20 year ministry in Hadleigh of the Very Revd Dr Thomas Goad, who was keen to tend and beautify his splendid church - albeit sometimes rather eccentrically, and often in partnership with the Hadleigh artist, Benjamin Coleman, who painted in 1629 a picture of the interior on the wall of the Dean's study in the Deanery Tower. This is still in place and shows the church without any seating and midway down the nave the strainer arch which had been built to strengthen the walls. The font, which was enclosed in green-painted rails with statues of the four Evangelists, was emblazoned with a Greek palindrome and crowned with a wooden cover. The parclose screens were in place, the Royal Arms hung above the doorway to the small south porch, the mighty pulpit with its sounding-board stood against the second pier westwards on the south side of the nave and at the east end was the Communion Table, enclosed in its three-sided rails. Over the external doorway of the small south porch Dean Goad commissioned in 1627 a large sundial, below which Coleman painted a churchyard scene in which the good Dean, in his surplice, was conducting the Burial Service. On the nave's west wall, above and around the western gallery, Coleman painted 'the prospect of a church or some stately fabric' to give the impression of

the church extending further westwards. On a more practical level, Goad established a parochial library in the south chapel which around 1685 had 142 volumes but by 1721 only the shelves remained.

Further destruction of what the Puritans regarded as superstitious images and inscriptions took place in the 1640s. To the dismay of Dean Goad's successor, Hadleigh people removed the Laudian communion rails themselves in 1641 and on February 2nd 1644 the Puritan 'inspector', William Dowsing, visited St Mary's and recorded in his Journal, "We brake down 30 superstitious pictures (maybe in stained glass), and gave order for taking down the rest, which were about 70; and took up an inscription (probably in brass), '*Quorum animabus propitiatur deus*' (upon whose soul may God have mercy), and "gave order for the takeing down of a cross on the steeple; gave 14 days".



**The 1700s and early 1800s** - Thanks to the keen eye and detailed notes of David Elisha Davy of Ufford, who visited the church in 1805 and 1825, and to the writings in 1857 and 1866 of Hugh Pigot, curate of Hadleigh, we can gain a good idea of what St Mary's looked like during this period and when various alterations had taken place.

The sanctuary was raised two steps above the chancel and separated by a straight communion rail. The lower ten feet of its walls were lined with wainscot and rising gloriously above the Communion table was a handsome altarpiece. Its central section had fluted pillars supporting a pediment, painted with a 'Glory' (the IHS monogram of Our Lord, surrounded by rays). The central panels were inscribed with the Ten Commandments, painted in black letters on a gold background and flanking them were the figures of Moses and Aaron, flanked in turn by outer panels inscribed with the Lord's Prayer and Apostles' Creed. This had been erected in 1744 at the behest of Dean Wilkins (rector 1719-45) by Messrs Kirby & Harris at a cost of £150. His successor, Dean Thomas Tanner (rector 1745-86), had filled the great east window with painted glass in 1750, which had faded and been replaced with clear glass by 1825, although the inscription 'TT 1750' remained above it. The panelled chancel roof was painted white and on its walls hung two hatchments. Pigot noted that hidden at the end of towering box-pews in the chancel were the mutilated remains of misericord stalls.

The nave 'ceiling' was described as 'of plaster, in three arches', which indicates that it was the same shape as the present roof. Against the first pier westwards on the north side was the tall pulpit, painted black but with gilt carving and mouldings. On the underside of the sounding-board above it was the IHS monogram, also a scroll inscribed '*In Coelo Cathedram habet qui docet corda*'. The box pews which filled the church were 'tolerably uniform, though not very neatly kept, being in much want of painting and cleaning'. The carvings on the font were (apart from the replaced angels) much as we see today, but the panels were painted, 'rather gaudily', with a Greek inscription which read the same backwards as forwards (meaning 'Cleanse my sin and not my face only'), the initials of the churchwardens, the date 1630, 'TD' (for Thomas Drake, rector 1786-90) and 'restored 1790'. The gallery at the west end, adorned with the arms of Hadleigh and the date 1630, accommodated the 'handsome organ', placed there c.1730, above which was a clock.

The second south porch still stood, although the doorway into the church had been blocked up in 1767. By 1825 the south chapel was used as a Sunday School and entry to it via the porch had been blocked by brass wire-netting.

Davy noted the angel roof-corbels in the north aisle and its parclose screen, near to which were some large carved 'old seats', also a narrow desk with three chained volumes of *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*. In the north chapel was a doorway into the chancel 'now stopt up', also two bread-shelves and details of bequests of bread for the poor by Thomas Alabaster (1592), John Calton (1614) and John Fiske (1715) - all distributed on Sundays after Evensong. The east and west windows of both aisles contained a considerable amount of 15th and 16th century glass, including the arms of some Archbishops of Canterbury.

Various repairs took place in the early 19th century, including renewing the south aisle roof, part in 1808 and the remainder in 1818. In 1827 the foundations of the 'supposed chapel' (i.e. the earlier Saxon church) were excavated in the churchyard.

1830 saw the beginning of the short but memorable ministry here of Hugh James Rose, who at the age of 35 was a Prebendary of Chichester Cathedral and had been Chaplain to the Bishop of London and Vicar of Horsham. In 1832 he began the *British Magazine* which propagated High Church teaching and in July 1833, in the Deanery Tower, he hosted the Hadleigh Conference which could be said to have spearheaded the Tractarian Movement and the Catholic Revival in the Church of England. He left Hadleigh in September 1833 when he was appointed Professor of Divinity at the University of Durham and also vicar of Fairstead (Essex) and of St Thomas, Southwark. He resigned Fairstead in 1836 to become Principal of Kings College London, but died two years later at the age of 43. He suffered badly from asthma and had exchanged Horsham for Hadleigh for the good of his health.

In 1834, Dean Rose's successor, William Lyall (rector 1833-41 and formerly Archdeacon of Colchester), instigated repairs (costing about £44) which included the cleaning of the walls, the removal of Benjamin Coleman's 'church' painting from the nave's west wall and the placing of the pulpit in a central position, beneath the chancel arch. Dean Lyall was to become

Dean of Canterbury.

In 1837 the parish of Hadleigh ceased to be under the direct jurisdiction of the Archbishop of Canterbury and was transferred to the diocese of Ely.

The 1850s - The Religious Census conducted in 1851 stated that 571 sittings in the church were free of pew-rents, allowing a further 1065 to be rented. On census Sunday (from a population of 3176), there was a morning congregation of 680, 947 in the afternoon and 254 present at the evening service, also 53 attended the service in the 'Dr Pykenham's Almshouse Chapel'. The Holy Communion was celebrated monthly and at Festivals. Interestingly, the Independent Chapel recorded 780 morning worshippers, 1090 in the afternoon (plus 268 scholars at both services) and 300 in the evening. A visitor in 1858 described the rector (Dean Henry Barry Knox, rector 1841-69) as 'an aged gentleman, of sanguine nervous temperament and pure white hair and quite at home in his lofty and isolated pulpit'.

In 1854 the Ipswich architect, Frederick Barnes prepared a specification for the church's first major 19th century restoration, which was carried out by Edward S. Downes of High Street Hadleigh and paid for between 1854-57. Barnes restored many Suffolk churches and designed several nonconformist churches, also St Andrew's Melton and the railway stations at Needham Market and Stowmarket. At St Mary's under his direction the plaster covering the external walls was removed, the flintwork repointed, the buttresses repaired, and most of the stonework of the windows was carefully renewed using Caen stone. Their carved corbels were found to be generally good and were preserved. The second south porch was demolished and its niche and two entrance arches set in the west wall of the churchyard. The timber balustrade (known as the 'cradle') around the base of the spire was replaced by an embattled stone parapet and the brick staircase-turret was faced with flintwork. The east front was repointed and the stonework of the great east window entirely renewed.

Dean Knox spearheaded the restoration of the chancel in 1859, to the designs of George Edward Pritchett of London and Bishops Stortford. He restored several Hertfordshire and Essex churches, also those at nearby Layham and Hitcham. He restored and re-lead the roof, preserving as much of the fine 15th century woodcarving as possible and providing new

stone corbels, carved by William Farmer of Westminster Bridge Road, London. The Grecian altarpiece of 1744 was removed and replaced with a carved reredos of Caen stone, designed by Pritchett and sculpted by William Farmer, with the Ten Commandments on zinc plates which were supplied by Mr A Sprague of Colchester. Its cost of £145.19s.3d was raised by a Bazaar organised in 1858 by Hadleigh ladies. The removal of the sanctuary wainscoting revealed the very mutilated piscina and sedilia, which were restored, also the little squints into the south chapel. The box-pews in the chancel were replaced by the present carved stalls, incorporating what remained of the mediaeval misericord stalls and a new altar table was made out of old beams from the chancel roof. Because the south face of the Easter Sepulchre had been cut away, the north face was taken and fixed to the south side. There was some concern about the nave roof and Pritchett examined it and strengthened the eastern tiebeam with iron bands.

It is interesting that when Hugh Pigott wrote in 1866, the north chapel was equipped for use as a private school and the south chapel was the venue for a girls' school on Sundays.

In 1871 the third major restoration transformed the church's interior. The architect was John Drayton Wyatt of London, who had worked in Sir Gilbert Scott's practice and his designs may be seen in several English churches, including over 20 in West Suffolk. The contractor was Joseph Pettit of Hadleigh and much of the stone-carving was carried out by John Spurgeon of Stowmarket. The work lasted nearly a year, with the services taking place in the Town Hall and the Boys' National School in Bridge Street.

The commodious box pews (which reached a height of 4ft 4inches in the north aisle, 4ft 9inches in the nave and nearly 5 feet in the south aisle) were replaced by the present oak benches. The 1859 chancel stalls were not touched. The nave roof had recently undergone some restoration and this was completed, also the aisle roofs were put in order with new timbers and stone corbels where required. The parclose screens were repaired and given new cresting at the top. The entire church was re-floored with tiles supplied by William Godwin of Lugwardine, Herefordshire. A new pulpit was made by Farmer & Brindley of Westminster Bridge Road in memory of Dean Knox, also matching prayer desks by Rattee & Kett of Cambridge

and a brass lectern by Hardman of Birmingham in memory of Anna Louisa Knox. The font was restored and given new carved angels by John Spurgeon. The Bishop of Ely preached at the Re-opening Service on Thursday 7th December 1871. The total cost of the work done was in the region of £1500.

**1900-1933.** As a memorial to Dean Edward Spooner, who died in 1899, the organ was rebuilt by J J Binns and was dedicated on 25th July 1900, when the late Dean's nephew (the Venerable Maxwell Spooner, Archdeacon of Maidstone) preached.

His successor, Dean Blakiston, died in 1909 and in his memory a new High Altar was made, and an altar for St John's Chapel, to the designs of G H Fellowes Prynne (son of Fr George Rundle Prynne, vicar of St Peter's Plymouth, where Dean Fryer had served his title). These were dedicated by Bishop William Harrison (rector of Thorpe Morieux and formerly Bishop of Glasgow & Galloway) on 31st October 1911.

To commemorate Dean Fryer's brief ministry here, which ended with his death in 1911, the doorway and lobby in the north wall of the Lady Chapel (then the choir vestry) were made in 1912. These were designed by the versatile 'Arts and Crafts' architect, Charles Spooner, who was a nephew of the late Dean Spooner and who created the beautiful churches of St Christopher Haslemere and St Bartholomew Ipswich, amongst others. He planned to re-use the 15th century doorway from the demolished porch (set into the churchyard wall) for this, to match the south chapel door opposite, but in the end he created a new doorway. He designed the memorial tablet beside it, of Hopton Wood stone, supplied by Christie of Golders Green.

In 1925, to commemorate Bishop John Overall's connections with Hadleigh, Charles Spooner designed the font cover, which was dedicated by Archbishop Randall Davidson on June 26th. Spooner also supervised the re-leading of the spire in 1926 and the removal of Barnes' embattled parapet which surrounded its base.

1933 was an important year for the Church of England and for Hadleigh, being the centenary of the beginning of the Catholic Revival and of the Hadleigh Conference which had spearheaded it. To commemorate this

the room above the clergy vestry was expanded, the chancel vestry and the Lady chapel was restored to its original proportions, using the existing High Altar. The sanctuary was reordered, repaired and enlarged by bringing the Communion Rail forward. The 1859 reredos was removed and a new and longer 'English' altar, furnished with riddel-posts and curtains, was installed. This work, probably designed by the now elderly Charles Spooner (1862-1938), was dedicated on 22nd February 1935.

Since 1933 much has been done to maintain and beautify the church and to enable it to better serve those whose Spiritual Home it is. These works include:-

1950 - The tower screen, designed by H. Munro Cautley (who also designed the World War 2 memorial) was dedicated 18th June 1950.

1975 - A central nave altar, with platform was designed by Giles Blomfield. An aumbry was made in St John's Chapel for the reservation of the Sacrament.

1989 - Toilets were installed in the base of the tower and an office area was created in the south-west corner.

1996 - A new nave altar was made and Our Lady's statue was placed in the Lady Chapel.

## Exploring the Exterior

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Few visitors will forget the incomparable SETTING of this vast church, at the heart of the town, but set sedately back from the High Street, its large churchyard providing a green oasis of peace and beauty. The tempting view along Church Street to the church's mighty east end face-on gives little hint of what awaits us when we arrive at the churchyard, which is bordered by two amazing buildings of great interest and historical importance.

To the south is the three-storeyed timber-framed building, known as the **GUILDHALL**, although the central part seen from the churchyard was in fact the Market Hall. Part of this complex was built in 1451 as the meeting-place for at least five religious gilds which existed in the town. It has had several uses over the years, including as elementary and grammar schools, almshouses, a workhouse and even (from 1901-25) a corset factory!

To the west rises the great Tudor-brick bulk of the **DEANERY TOWER**, built in 1495 by Archdeacon William Pykenham (rector 1469-97). It was here in 1833 that Dean Rose convened the Hadleigh Conference which marked the beginning of the Catholic Revival in the Church of England. The Dean had the adjoining mock-Tudor Deanery house built in 1831 to the designs of John Harrison of London, with input from the Revd William Whewell, Master of Trinity College Cambridge. Set in the wall to the south of the tower are two worn **DOORWAYS** and the **NICHE** from the demolished second south porch, also the upper half of a mediaeval stone coffin.

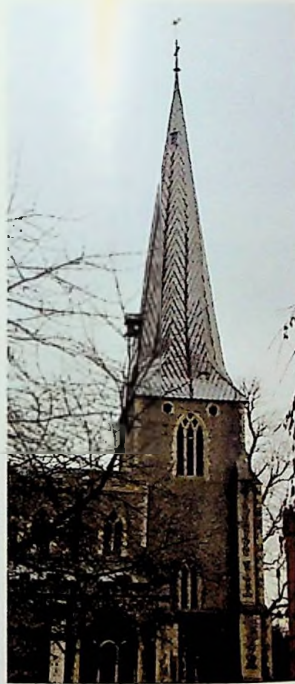
Out of the greens of the churchyard rise the massive walls of Hadleigh's mighty church. It is hard to imagine the thousands upon thousands of flints gathered from the fields to build this structure by hand, or the tons of limestone imported from the East Midlands to provide dressings for the buttresses, windows and doorways.

The western **TOWER**, which is strengthened by sturdy angle buttresses at its western corners, rose gradually during the 1200s. Its bottom stage has single north and south 'lancet' windows and a large west doorway, above which is a simple niche for a statue. Large 'double Y' traceried windows

light the ringing chamber above and the belfry windows have intersecting tracery of c.1300 or just before. The north, south and east faces also have pairs of circular sexfoil (six-lobed) openings near the summit. The staircase turret on the south side is a late 15th century addition in Tudor brick, which received its flint facing in the 1850s.

Above this rises Hadleigh's tall tapering spire, which is a rarity in Suffolk, because the massive timber framework which holds it together remains from the early 1300s, although its lead covering was renewed in 1926. The warping of its timbers over the years has caused the spire to twist slightly, though not as dramatically as Chesterfield's famous twisted spire. The weight of the lead must be enormous, covering a height of 71 feet, which is greater than the tower's 64 feet and making a total height of 135 feet.

Beneath its little gable (dated 1801) on the spire's east face hangs the former Sanctus bell, now the **CLOCK BELL** (weighing 6½cwt) which is Suffolk's oldest inscribed bell and has sounded over Hadleigh since c.1280. It is inscribed 'AVE MARIA GRACIA PLENA DOMINUS TECVM' (Hail Mary, full of Grace, the Lord is with Thee), but reads backwards and with the letters reversed. The church possessed a **CLOCK** in 1547 and in 1750 Thomas Watts of Hadleigh installed a new one with chimes. This underwent repairs in 1840 and 1852, but its workings were removed and replaced with an electric movement c.1964.



Eastwards from the tower stretches the tall **CLERESTORY** of the nave and chancel, its windows providing a 'clear-storey' to flood the upper part of the church with light. Eight of the ten double clerestory windows each side of the nave are set attractively in pairs. The further five in the chancel have slightly differently-designed late 14th or early 15th century tracery.





Stretching the entire length of the nave and chancel are the **NORTH AND SOUTH AISLES**, which are strengthened by elegant buttresses and lit by a noble array of large and uniform triple Perpendicular windows. Their stonework was renewed by Frederick Barnes c. 1855, but the hoodmoulds (or dripstones, to deflect rainwater) which frame their arches and the carved corbels upon which they rest, are mostly original. One window in the south chapel is partly pierced by a 15th century doorway; a similar doorway was placed in the north chapel in 1912. Charles Spooner designed their doors, skilfully placing the hinges partly under the woodwork as the mediaeval craftsmen had done in the great south doors. The large north doorway has a more sharply-pointed arch, dating from the early 1300s.

The walls of the church are crowned by embattled parapets (except those of the chancel which are straight-topped), beneath which carved gargoyle faces (some now redundant) throw the rainwater clear of the walls.

The east face of the church is magnificent, with the mighty seven-light window filling much of the chancel's east wall, and the flanking three-light east windows of the aisles.

The 15th century two-storeyed **SACRISTY** survives to the north of the chancel, and set at a rather jaunty angle to it in order to keep its east wall within the churchyard. It is lit by two-light northern and eastern windows.

The embattled **SOUTH PORCH**, with its pairs of tall two-light eastern and western windows and its wide entrance arch, with three niches above, is work of the early 1400s. Inside, at the corners, is carved stonework which formed the springing of a vaulted stone ceiling, indicating that there was once an upper room above, or maybe that one was intended but never built. The porch shelters one of the church's great treasures - the sturdy and beautifully-carved south doors. These masterpieces of architecture in timber have opened and closed on their fine hinges (which are cleverly set beneath the upright mullions of the traceried panelling) to admit worshippers and visitors for over half a millennium.

## What to See Inside the Church

It is worth taking time just to sit and drink in the amazing size, scale and proportions of this great and spacious building. From the west end we look down some 142 feet to the east window and across a width of about 66 feet. The church is a vast rectangle, the nave (94 feet by 24½ feet) and chancel (48 feet long) flanked by north (18 feet 9 inches wide) and south (17 feet 4 inches wide) aisles, with **ARCADES** of five wide bays to the nave and two more to the chancel. Their arches rest upon quatrefoil (four-lobed) piers and are framed with hoodmoulds. Those in the nave rise from angel corbels on the north side and devils on the south. The nave arcade may well date from c.1400, the chancel arcade following a little later in the 15th century, together with the wide **CHANCEL ARCH**.

The **ROOFS** above our heads are fine pieces of design and craftsmanship. The nave roof, restored by J D Wyatt in 1869-71, is coved and boarded, with massive encased tiebeams. Whilst the south aisle roof was almost entirely renewed in 1871 (but two fascinating mediaeval creatures remain as corbels to support its south side), that in the north aisle incorporates some of its 15th century moulded timbers and rests upon fine sets of angel corbels. The chancel has a magnificent and almost flat 15th century panelled roof, strengthened by arch-braced tiebeams. There are carved bosses at the intersection of the ribs which frame its intricately-carved square traceried panels. The roof was tastefully restored by Pritchett in 1859, who added the large stone corbels (carved by Farmer) beneath it, showing the four Evangelists with their emblems and two western angels.

*Beneath these roofs a host of features and treasures from many periods may be discovered and enjoyed, which we now examine in detail in different areas of the church.*

### THE WEST END OF THE CHURCH

St Mary's is not lacking in space and the area at the west end of the aisles has been skilfully adapted to enable the building to minister more usefully.

The south-west corner now forms the **PARISH OFFICE** (1989), incorporating woodwork from superfluous pews, whilst the western

section of the north aisle has been converted into a **SOCIAL AREA**, equipped with comfortable and tasteful modern furnishings. On the north wall here hangs Hadleigh's old **MARKET SCALES**.



Hadleigh's Market Scales

The simple **TOWER ARCH** contains H. Munro Cautley's **TOWER SCREEN**, with fine woodcarving, a cornice of vine-trail and cresting, made in 1950 in memory of Dr John Muriel, who died in 1946. The 13th century **LANCET WINDOW** above, maybe originally a Sanctus Bell window but later an entrance to the western gallery, contains fragments of stained glass, some of which are mediaeval.

Fixed to the west wall nearby are four lozenge-shaped **HATCHMENTS**. These were hung for a period of time outside the home of a deceased person, before being brought for permanent display in the parish church. These hatchments commemorate: Dean David Wilkins (died 1745); William Bunbury (died 1748); Mary, wife of Dean Thomas Tanner (died 1779); Dean Edward Hay-Drummond (died 1829).



The Tower Arch, showing the Lancel Window and hatchments (Font in foreground)

North of the tower entrance is Hadleigh's remarkable **RINGERS' GOTCH** - the bellringers' beer-jug, made of glazed earthenware in 1715 and holding 32 pints. Its inscription tells us 'If you love me do not lend me / Use me often keep me clenly / Fill me full or not at all / And that with strong and not with small'.

St Mary's ring of eight **BELLS** still proclaim the love of God across Hadleigh in their unique and skilful way. The treble and 2nd bells were cast by Miles Graye of Colchester in 1678, who also made the 3rd in 1679 and the tenor bell (diameter - 52½", weight - 22cwt, 1qtr, 171b) in 1680. The 4th, by Henry Jordan of London, has rung out since c.1480, the 5th was made in 1806 by William Dobson of Downham Market, the 6th by Mears of Whitechapel in 1856 and the 7th by Thomas Osborn of Downham Market in 1788. They were re-hung in a new frame in 1977. The earliest peal-board in the ringing-chamber records a peal rung in February 1744.

Standing at the west end (and symbolising our entry by Holy Baptism into the family of the Church) is the octagonal **FONT**, where Hadleigh folk have been baptised for over 600 years. It is a fine piece of 14th century stonework, which has been restored and recut where necessary in 1871 (the new work in lighter-coloured stone), its stem and bowl having elegant shallow recesses with crocketed arches and framing little vaulted canopies. Beneath the bowl are 19th century angels with outstretched wings.

As a memorial to John Overall, Bishop of Norwich and one of the translators of the *Authorised Version* of the Bible in 1611, and who was baptised at this font in 1560, the Archbishop of Canterbury dedicated Charles Spooner's soaring **FONT COVER** in June 1925. This elegant 16 foot openwork spire has coats of arms picked out in colour, including those of the town of Hadleigh, the emblem of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and the dioceses of Ely, Canterbury, St Edmundsbury & Ipswich, Norwich and Lichfield.

**IN THE SOUTH AISLE**, look for -

The oak **CHEST**, with its three locks and a money-slot in its lid - once known as 'the old town bank', but now for our donations to help keep St Mary's intact and beautiful.



The **WORLD WAR 2 MEMORIAL** (recording 39 names), by H Munro

Cautley, in front of which is a **TOMB** given in memory of Charles William Osborn, who died in 1949. Upon the table is an **OLDEN BOOK**, carved in wood by a French craftsman to celebrate ten years of the twinning of Hadleigh with the French town of Bussies, near Lille.

The **WORLD WAR 1 MEMORIAL**, recording the names of 111 Hadleigh people who lost their lives. This was designed by Charles Spooner and its crucifix was painted in tempora by Minnie Dibden Spooner, his wife, together with the arms of the town and diocese.

Although now but a shadow of its former glory, the **TOMB RECESS** beneath the eastern window shows beautiful stone-carving of c.1320-30, with masses of foliage in its spandrels and a fine finial crowning its ogee-shaped arch. It must have covered the last resting-place of somebody important, but certainly not Guthrum (as some have thought), who died over 300 years before the tomb was made.



Nearby may be seen a **BIBLE BOX** which is dated 1626 and is embellished by good decorative woodcarving of the period.

The small ogee-shaped **RECESS** in the wall further east has been renewed, but may have once framed a statue. The keen eye will notice at the foot of the adjacent window's eastern splay two **TINY STONE SHAFTS** which were once part of another small niche.

### IN THE NAVE AND NORTH AISLE

The **SEATING** in the nave and aisles was completed in 1871 to the design of J.D.Wyatt. It is said that in 1869 Hadleigh children were invited to collect wild flowers and leaves to be used as models for the designs in the ends of the benches.

The **LECTERN**, with its traceried front and rich woodcarving, given in memory of William Woods who died in 1900, stands at the south of the chancel arch.

Opposite is the **PULPIT** of 1871, its traceried oak body (carved by John Spurgeon of Stowmarket) resting upon Farmer & Brindley's elaborate arcaded base of stone and marble. Nearby is a **MODEL OF THE CHURCH** in a glass case.

At the centre and forming a focal-point in the midst of the building is the **NAVE ALTAR**, made by Ben Gordon in 1996. Here the church's central act of worship takes place.

In the north aisle are **TWO CHESTS**, of pine, with poplar lids hollowed out of half tree-trunks, and both dating probably from the early 1400s. The larger chest has five locks and the smaller has three - which were required by law for a parish chest, the rector and two churchwardens each having a key, so that all three needed to be present to open it.



The 1871 pulpit

### IN THE LADY CHAPEL (NORTH CHANCEL AISLE)

This houses St Mary's historic **ORGAN**, parts of which (including its fine case) survive from the organ by Father Smith which was installed at East Donyland Hall, near Colchester, in 1687 and then in the west gallery here c.1730. This instrument was rebuilt and enlarged in 1900 by J J Binns and was overhauled and adjusted by Bishop & Son in 1976. It has three manuals, pedals and 24 speaking stops. *A separate booklet by Michael Colleer, giving a detailed history and specification of the organ, is available.*

The **17TH CENTURY CHEST** nearby has a single lock, and the initials 'WS' - for William Smith, a local brewer who in 1624 bequeathed gowns, also marked 'WS' for the inmates of Pykenham's Almshouses, 'to be stored in a chest so marked' - maybe this was it.

In the north wall are two **DOORWAYS**. That to the vestry has a fine arch with corbel heads and a solid mediaeval door. To the west of this is the lobby leading to the doorway to the churchyard which, together with the nearby memorial plaque, were designed by Charles Spooner in memory of Dean Fryer's short ministry here; he died in 1910.

*ADDENDUM - Page 22, after paragraph 3.*

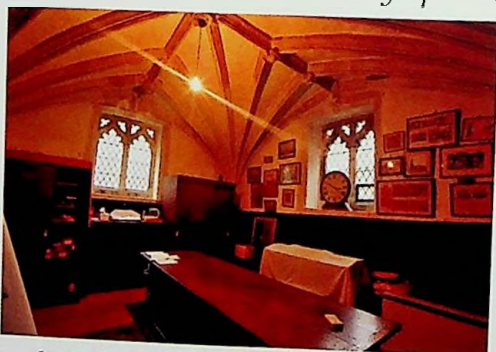
We enter the Lady chapel (north) and St John's Chapel (south) through beautiful 15th century **PARCLOSE SCREENS**. These have been sympathetically reared and some of their woodwork has been replaced, but the pairs of double traceried panels in their lower sections and the delicate openwork tracery above shows fine craftsmanship. These screens may not be in their original positions and the northern one was almost certainly longer.

Although the rood screen and its loft (beneath the chancel arch) have long disappeared, the **OPENINGS** which gave access to the rood loft may be seen high up in the wall, flanking the chancel arch.

The **ALTAR** here was designed by Fellowes Prynne for the south chapel in 1910 in memory of Mrs Anna Spooner and was moved here in 1935.

The **STATUE OF OUR LADY**, was carved in 1996 by Derek Jarman of Ipswich from a block of L'Epine stone from a quarry east of Paris, and is set on a plinth of Ancaster stone.

**THE VESTRY** (*not usually open to visitors*).



A sturdy mediaeval door gives access, through a considerable thickness of wall, to this two-storeyed mediaeval sacristy, set at a slight angle to the rest of the church.

The walls of its lower chamber are wainscoted with traceried woodwork of considerable age and probably brought here from elsewhere in the church - maybe formerly roof-panels, or possibly woodwork from the wainscot with which Dean David Wilkins lined the sanctuary walls in 1744 and which was removed in 1859. On the walls hang an array of interesting items, including pictures of the church, its clergy, and events that have taken place here. A clock-face preserved here may well be that which was above the organ when it stood at the west end of the church. It is by Payne, the Hadleigh clockmaker; several generations of this family made clocks in the High Street between c.1785 and 1890.

Above is a beautifully-preserved vaulted ceiling, studded with carved stone bosses of angels, faces and foliage. In the south-west corner a 15th century doorway and door gives access, by means of a newel staircase, to the upper chamber, with its floor of bricks, pammments and old glazed tiles.

**IN THE CHANCEL**

It is worth taking time to appreciate how large and spacious this chancel is and to admire the proportions of the mighty **EAST WINDOW**. This measures an amazing 29ft 4 inches by 19ft 6 inches and fills a tremendous amount of the wall-space.

We will gladly forgive you for lying flat on one of the seats in order to admire the spectacular 15th century **ROOF**, with its exquisite traceried panels and its carved bosses where the ribs intersect, also the carved spandrels of the strengthening braces and the four Evangelists and four angels in stone of 1859 which support them.



The chancel **STALLS** with their carved ends and traceried fronts are mostly part of Pritchett's refurbishing of 1859, but the rear stalls incorporate 15th century woodwork. Their former misericord seats have gone, but seven beautifully carved armrests remain.



The keen eye will notice in J.D. Wyatt's 1871 **COMMUNION RAILS** carvings of the Instruments of the Passion. Working from north-south we see: the cockerel, pillar, scourges, ladder hammer and nails, pincers, seamless robe and dice, crown of thorns, cross, spear and sponge.

The large **STANDARD CANDLESTICKS** were given in memory of Frederick H. Hockey, an organist, who was killed in 1915.

The wide **HIGH ALTAR** was made in 1935 as part of the re-ordering of the sanctuary and north chapel in celebration of Dean Rose and the pioneering work of the Hadleigh Conference of 1833. Two **PLAQUES** on

the south wall record this. The (1920) Dean Rose and the lower records the 1935 work in by Eric.

In the wall to the south of the altar is a **DOUBLE PISCINA RECESS**, now much renewed but originally of c.1280-1310. The two piscina drains have gone -- one for the disposal of water from the ablutions of the chalice etc. and the other for water from the washing of the priest's hands. Piscinas from the early 1300s onwards had a single drain, because thenceforth all consecrated material was 'reverently consumed' - as it is today. Also mostly renewed are the adjacent three **SEDILIA**, their trefoil-headed canopies resting upon circular shafts, similar to and contemporary with the piscina. Here the Celebrant, Deacon and Subdeacon sat during parts of the mediaeval High Mass.

On the north side is a magnificent 15th century tomb-recess, with a beautiful vaulted ceiling - all exquisitely carved not just for the glory of its occupants but also to the glory of God, to serve also as the **EASTER SEPULCHRE**, where on Good Friday the Blessed Sacrament was reverently placed, to symbolise Our Lord's burial in the tomb, to be triumphantly and gloriously returned to the altar on Easter Day. The beautiful stonecarving on the lower section of the tomb was carefully transferred here from the opposite (Lady Chapel) side in 1859 because this side had been completely cut away.

### IN SAINT JOHN'S CHAPEL (SOUTH CHANCEL AISLE)

The traceried **ALTAR TABLE** (which was the High Altar from 1910-35) was designed by G Fellowes Prynne in memory of Dean Blakiston (died 1909). Fitted into it is a marble mensa-slab, regarded by many as illegal and 'Popish' when it was made. The **COMMUNION RAILS** are a memorial to Captain Joshua Rowley, who was killed at Gaza in 1917.

The 14th century ogee-headed **PISCINA RECESS** now houses the **AUMBRY** (in memory of Brenda Capey, who died in 1974) where consecrated bread and wine from the Eucharist are reserved so that they can be taken to those who need them, especially those who are ill or housebound.

Above the brass on the south wall is the 'IHS' monogram of Our Lord's name in 19th century mosaic.

Three simple rectangular **SQUINTS** in the north wall give a view from the chapel towards the High Altar.

A seat to the south of the altar incorporates two **BENCH-ENDS** which may have been part of the mediaeval chancel stalls and are believed to be 14th century (a century earlier than most of Suffolk's mediaeval bench-ends). The eastern end has a massive and rather awkward-looking lion, with a long, hairy mane. His western counterpart (*pictured*) is visited by devotees of **ST EDMUND** - the martyred king of the East Angles. This creature is believed to be a wolf, with a hood and collar (and a fine mouthful of teeth), firmly holding a man's head by the hair. After the Danes killed Edmund with arrows in 869, they severed his head. Legend has it that his subjects searched for and found his headless body, and later the head, which was guarded by a wolf, who duly



surrendered it. When placed in its rightful position beside the body, the two were miraculously reunited. Interestingly the 'wolf's' back feet are cloven and he appears to have folded-back wings - his real identity is a mystery! Note the shoes on his front feet that date him to the early 1400s.

### STAINED GLASS

The beautiful mediaeval glass which must have filled these great windows, providing a kaleidoscope of colour and visual aids to teach the Faith, has almost entirely disappeared, but 19th and 20th century craftsmen in glass have created some interesting and beautiful windows, mostly given in memory of people who were part of this church and parish.

*East Window.* This vast seven-light window was filled in 1878 with glass by Messrs Ward & Hughes of Soho, London at a cost of £450. Matilda, wife of Dean Robert Wheeler (who had died in 1875) collected subscriptions from Hadleigh folk to give panels in memory of their loved-

ones. The main lights have 14 scenes from our Lord's life, with the twelve Apostles immediately above, surrounded by a host of angels and Christian symbols. (*John Rye's detailed booklet about this window is on sale in the church*).

**North chapel, East window.** In 1854 the fragments of earlier glass remaining in the church, together with some glass given by Dean Knox and some 'modern glass of antique pattern' were assembled in this window, at a cost of £40 by George Hedgeland. Amongst the coats of arms displayed are the badges of King Edward IV and Queen Elizabeth I in the tracery and the nine roundels in the main lights include the arms of some 16th and 17th century archbishops of Canterbury (recognisable by the 'Y' shaped pallium on a blue background), with Archbishop Juxon's, and the date 1663 central at the bottom.



The East Window

**South chapel, East window.** Here we see George Hedgeland (who created the great west window at Norwich Cathedral) in his own right in this scene of Jesus with children. Hedgeland was a Classical painter and so the scene is in a Classical setting. His work is all too-rare because he functioned during a brief period in the 1850s before selling his Baker Street premises and emigrating to Australia in 1860 because of poor health. This window was given in 1857 by Dean Knox in memory of Elizabeth, his second wife, who died in childbirth, and of his son.

**South Chapel, south-east.** Dr Rowland Taylor's ministry is commemorated here in scenes of his preaching, trial and martyrdom on Aldham Common in 1555. This and the other south aisle windows are by the firm of Ward & Hughes.

**South Chapel, above doorway.** A Nativity scene with a host of angels looking down adoringly.

**South Chapel, south-west.** Scenes of the Prodigal Son, the angel at the empty tomb and the Good Samaritan, in memory of Octavia, wife of Dean Edward Spooner and daughter of Sir Oswald Moseley, died 1883.

**South Aisle, working westwards:**

1. Old Testament scenes of David, Jonathan and King Saul, in memory of Charles Archer Grimwade, a Hadleigh solicitor, who died in 1896. The Ward & Hughes glass in this and the following two south windows is the very distinctive work of Thomas F. Curtis who took over the firm after Henry Hughes died in 1883.
2. Jesus' final commission and sending forth of his disciples and the Last Supper. In memory of Dean Edward Spooner (died 1899).
3. Scenes illustrating Faith, Hope and Charity, given in 1908 in memory of Thomas William Wilson, a merchant and maltster who lived in George Street and who died in 1896, also of his wife and son.



The South Chapel, south-east Window

**North aisle.** Memorial window to Dean John Betton, who died in February 1985 and his son Peter, who died the previous month. Its theme is Praise and Thanksgiving, the blue at its base being the colour of the cuffs that he wore as a Canon of Lincoln Cathedral. This glass was designed by his friend John O'Connor, a former Head of Colchester School of Art and was made by Alfred Fisher of King's Langley.

**Small nave west window.** This is filled with patterns made up of stained glass fragments, some of which are mediaeval.

## MEMORIALS

In addition to the furnishings and stained glass given in memory of Hadleigh worthies, there are many memorial inscriptions, seen in **LEDGER SLABS** in the floors, including a few remaining **BRASSES**, also

a variety of **PLAQUES** on the walls. These tell us much about prominent Hadleigh families and past Deans who cared for this church and deserve a book of their own. The following are just a few examples which may interest the visitor :-

Most of the **BRASSES** have been mounted on the walls and are as follows :-

1. Inscription to *BRIDGETT CHAMPENEIS* (wife of Richard, of Bexley and daughter of Robert Rolfe of Hadleigh), died 1617, and Thomas, their 2nd son. (*North aisle wall*)
2. *RICHARD and ELIZABETH GLANFIELD*, who both died of plague in 1637, are portrayed holding hands and looking into each other's eyes in their brass. (*North aisle wall*)
3. Coat of arms and inscription to *WILLIAM and DOROTHY FOORTHE*, 1599. (*north aisle floor, west of organ*)
4. The figure of *ANNE STILL* (1593), wife of John Still, Bishop of Bath & Wells and daughter of Thomas Albaster, with inscription beneath and part of another forming an arch around her. (*North Chapel, near vestry door*)
5. The kneeling figure of *THOMAS ALABASTER* (1592) - a clothier in the town for 50 years. (*South chapel, north wall*).
6. Facsimiles of the reverse side of (7) and of another section of this rather beautiful brass - from one of the sections known to survive at Sibton church and at the Bridewell Museum at Norwich. (*South chapel, north wall*).
7. 16th century brass inscription, commemorating *Dr ROWLAND TAYLOR*, who was put to death on Aldham Common in 1555. This is a palimpsest brass, where part of an earlier Flemish brass has been reversed and 'recycled'. (*South Chapel, north wall*)
8. The kneeling figure of *JOHN ALABASTER*, son of Thomas, who died in 1637. On the same board is an inscription to *MARGERIE GAELL* (wife of Edward), 1608 and *ROSE GAELL* (wife of Edward's son John), 1609. (*South Chapel, south wall*)
9. Shield and inscription to *ROBERT ROLFE* (1621). (*South Chapel floor*)

Amongst the many **PLAQUES** on the walls, the following are especially worth finding:-

#### *North Aisle -*

1. *JOSEPH BEAUMONT* (1681), five times Mayor of Hadleigh, has a cartouche in a black marble frame, with trumpet-blowing cherubs holding a heart (probably because he was 'open-hearted to the poor') and his coat of arms on a cartouche above. (*near north door*).
2. *GEORGE GAELL* (1667) has marble columns supporting a broken pediment, with his arms above and a cherub's face below.
3. His father *JOHN GAELL*, Hadleigh's first Mayor (died 1642) has black marble pillars, supporting a broken pediment, with his arms on a cartouche above.

#### *North Chapel -*

1. The Revd *THOMAS SPENSER*'s epitaph of 1571, on his wood-framed plaque above the vestry door has his epitaph in Latin and English, which tells us that, '*Two mothers had I, Cambridg: shee mee bred / And Oxford her degrees mee higher fed...*'
2. Surmounting the plaque of *SARAH JOHNSON*, 1793 (wife of a rector of Long Melford), are two putti - one lolling and one reclining - and an urn. This is the work of Charles Regnart of London, a prolific sculptor of national repute.
3. Dean *THOMAS TANNER* (1786) has a pleasing plaque, using various marbles and surmounted by a handsome urn.

#### *South Chapel and south aisle -*

1. The inscriptions on the plaques recording the interment of the ashes of Dean *FRANCIS CARTER* (1935) and of his wife *SIBELLA* (1940) are the work of Eric Gill.
2. The plaque in the south aisle to *GRACE MARY STRANGE* (1920) was designed by Charles Spooner and the beautiful Madonna and Child at its summit were painted by Mrs Spooner.
3. Also of interest is an uninscribed black **BURIAL SLAB** set in the floor near the south-west corner of the south chapel with a coat of arms and two demi-figures in relief. It is almost certain that the figure in clerical attire is no less than the eccentric *DEAN THOMAS GOAD* who, during his time here (1613-1638) did so much to enhance the church and its surroundings. The other figure is his brother Matthew, who died whilst attending Thomas' funeral and was buried in the same grave.

## The Chapel of St Mary Magdalene and St Catherine of Sienna, *known as the 'Row Chapel', in George Street.*

This mediaeval wayside chapel in the east side of the town was used by William Pykenham (rector 1469-1497) as the chapel for the inhabitants of the Almshouses that he built either side of it in the 1480s. A date of 1482 has been suggested for its rededication. The roof was being repaired in 1498, which date was found inscribed upon one of its timbers during the restoration in 1891.

It is well worth-while taking a walk along George Street, with its picturesque old houses, to enjoy this atmospheric little building which is much loved and still has the 'feel' of a Holy Place.

The two almshouse blocks which flanked the chapel beside the street were replaced in 1887 (commemorating Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee) by new almshouses to the designs of Henry Wright of Ipswich, who designed many houses in Ipswich and Felixstowe, also a rather grand church hall for St Mary's Walton.

The chapel is a tiny, single-celled building with an unassuming and almost domestic charm. Its brick and timber-framed walls have been repaired and replaced in parts over the years, especially during its major refurbishment in 1891, when the attractive timber and plaster porch, with its tiny western vestry, was totally renewed. In the south wall, east of the porch, a section of original mellow Tudor bricks survives, contrasting with the later bricks, which are larger. The rustic windows are rectangular, with timber frames and mullions; the east window has four lights and the west window, six lights. The chapel is crowned by a little bell-turret, capped with its own small overhanging tiled and gabled roof.

Inside, the chapel feels homely and intimate, and is flooded with light through the Arts and Crafts glass in its attractive timber window frames. Here we see work of great beauty and taste - a successful blending of late 15th century craftsmanship with that of 1891, which reflects the 'Arts and Crafts' tradition in architecture and furnishings and is a worthy example of the little-known genius of Charles Spooner, who so sympathetically supervised the 1891 restoration.

Internally the timber framework is exposed in the walls, and the timbers supporting the arch-braced tiebeams which straddle the chapel have a definite westward lean. Many original timbers survive, both here and in the pulpit, which incorporates 15th century traceried panels. The later reading desks have poppyhead ends. It is thought that these furnishings were made from unwanted woodwork from the parish church.

Apart from the 'honest' repairs which were needed here, Charles Spooner provided new timber cornices at the base of the roof, simple but sturdy 'Arts and Crafts' benches and a wooden dado round the lower parts of the walls. Over Minnie Dibdin Spooner's painted reredos, which showed the rising sun in gold and yellow, has been placed an embroidered panel with Our Lord, flanked by St Mary Magdalene and St Catherine of Sienna. Worked into the altar frontal is a cross, between the arms of which are the dates 1497 and 1997 in Roman numerals.

Interesting pictures of the chapel and the former almshouses may be seen on the walls.



