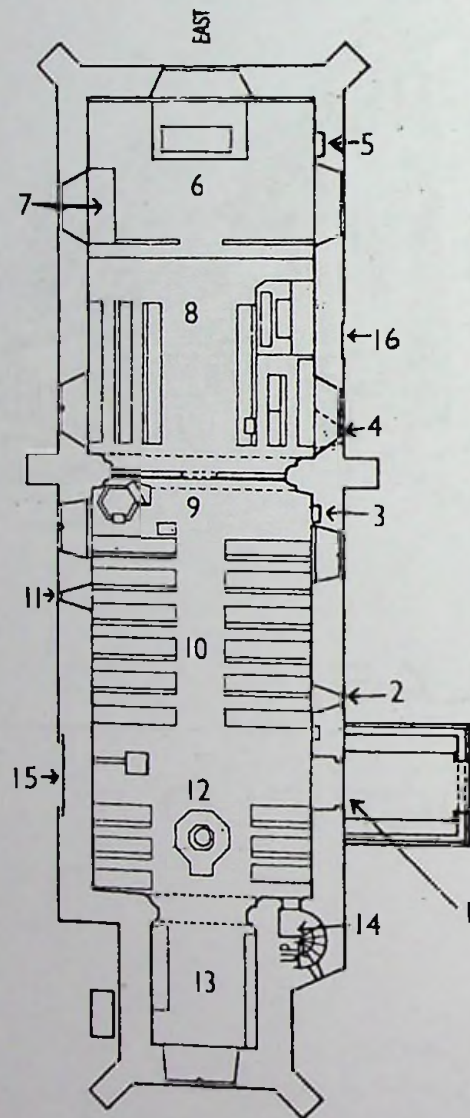




ST. NICOLAS

STANNINGFIELD

A SHORT GUIDE



A TOUR OF THE CHURCH

FOLLOW THE NUMBERED ROUTE ON THE PLAN

1. Enter the Church by the NORMAN SOUTH DOOR. The jambs and the arch which surround the door have a carved leaf motif and a hood mould decorated with a flower design (known as the ballflower). This type of carving was common in the early 14th C. The Timber porch is modern.
2. A NORMAN slit window.
3. A Piscina
4. A small squint window (now blocked) in the shape of a quatrefoil (resembling a symmetrical four-lobed leaf or flower). The window originally gave Parishioners a view of the Altar from the outside of the Church.
5. A Piscina
6. The Chancel was built in the 14th C. by the **ROKEWODE** family. The Chancel windows have unusual tracery. Those on the North side have double cusped quatrefoils in circles and those on the South side have pointed trefoils radially in circles. The East window is 14th C. with three lights, good tracery, cusped intersections broken by quatrefoiled circle at the top.
7. An Altar tomb under a canopy with various shields carved upon it displaying the arms of Rookwood, Clerbecke, Swynbourne, and Clopton. It is conjectured from the style of the monument and the several coats of Rookwood impaling Clopton that this is the tomb of **THOMAS ROOKWOOD** who died in 1521 and was married to **ANNE** daughter of **JOHN CLOPTON** of **KENTWELL, LONG MELFORD**.
8. Fine Poppyheads on the benches.

CONTD.-----

9. 15th C. traceried screen which was originally adorned by a Crucifix.

Over the Chancel Arch there is one of Stanningfield Church's most interesting assets ---- the 15th C. DOOM This wall painting shows the Risen Christ sitting on a rainbow at the last Judgement. He is surrounded by his Apostles and Angels. Beneath Him, people are emerging from their graves in order to be Judged. Unfortunately the Victorians sought to preserve it with something which has, sadly, prevented the moisture seeping through the plaster and it is peeling badly.

10. The oldest part of the building is the Nave which is **NORMAN**.

11. A **NORMAN** slit window

12. A 15th C. Octagonal Font with traceried shaft and bowl with the arms of Rookwood and St. Edmund carved upon it.

13. The Tower originally contained **THREE** bells, but in the 1880's owing to subsidence the top was removed with **TWO** bells, which were later sold as scrap. The clappers and two photographs of the Church with the Tower complete, hang in the vestry. The remaining bell is about 400 years old.

The West window is 15th C.

14. Tower stair.

15. From the outside can be seen the now blocked **NORMAN** North doorway which has the typical zig-zag decoration of the period.

16. From the outside can also be seen a Blocked Priests door. Also note nearby the quatrefoil squint window (4)

There has been a Church in Stanningfield for about 900 years and is mentioned in the Domesday Book (1085)

It is built of stone and flint and in 1881 was restored by a former Rector. Rev W.H.M. Carthew at a cost of £600.

THE REFORMATION AND THE ROOKWOODS

Had Suffolk been polled shortly after Elizabeth 1st came to the throne for or against the Reformation there is every reason to assume that there would have been a majority in the negative.

Many of the older Clergy had been nominated by the Abbays before the Dissolution and were in some way connected with the Lords of the Manors, and they had reluctantly accepted the changes. The **ROKWOODS** refused to accept the new order.

For nearly two years East Anglia was without a Bishop. Benefices fell vacant, and so remained. Disorder prevailed. Greedy Landowners began to lay their hands on what had been left of Church furniture.

In 1561 in the Archdeaconry of Suffolk there were 130 Parishes more or less destitute of a resident Clergyman.

Recusancy (i.e. refusal to attend Church of England services) was a standing cause of danger and Constables had a busy time hunting Roman reactionaries and Vestment-hating progressives. Many only outwardly conformed.

The early manor house was on a site of rising ground some four or five hundred yards west of the Church.

It probably became insufficient for the needs of the **ROOKWOOD** family so in 1574 **ROBERT ROOKWOOD** built the present **COLDHAM HALL** about 1 mile from the Church. It is a truly noble specimen of Elizabethan red brickwork and was originally moated.

The Rookwoods' adherence to the old religion brought them much trouble. Can Queen Elizabeths progress through Suffolk (and Norfolk) in 1578 been a sort of "recusant hunt"? She was entertained at Lawshall Hall and Hawstead House, but not Coldham Hall even though it must have been ready for visiting.

On 2/7/1587 Two Thirds of Roberts Estates were seized for recusancy, which included the Coldham Hall which he built.

Robert had 15 children. 7 by his first wife Bridget Kemp and 8 by his second wife Dorothy Drury. The Reformation had a considerable effect upon his family for generations.

AMBROSE ROOKWOOD was Roberts second son by his second wife and he inherited the estates --what was left of them. He was probably a young man at the time of the Gunpowder Plot, but life is not all measured by years. In the evil days, during the reign of JAMES 1st, the blossom of youth withered early, and men became old in the worst qualities of age before their judgements reached maturity. Such was Ambrose Rookwoods case, according to his own account of himself. It is not our function to sit in judgement on a man of gentle birth, exiled from the beautiful home which his father had built, trained to regard as loathsome 'heretics' all the authorities in Church and State. Such was this Stanningfield youth, who fell in with that restless adventurer, ROBERT CATESBY. 'He had been neither author nor actor', said he at his trial, 'but only persuaded and drawn to Catesby, whom he loved above any wordly man; and that he had concealed it, not from any malice to the person of the King or to the state, or for any ambitious prospects of his own, but only drawn from the tender regard and the faithful and dear respect he bore to Mr Catesby, his friend. Catesby did not think fit to trust him with the detail of the Gunpowder Plot at first, the running short of funds being the cause of drawing in ROOKWOOD, GRANT and TRESHAM. NOVEMBER 4th, 1605, saw Catesby ride off in the afternoon of that day for the Midland rendezvous of the conspirators. At midnight FAWKES emerged from his retreat and was arrested. The last of the band to stay in London was ROOKWOOD. He stayed until noon of the memorable 5th, to gather up the latest talk. Then he galloped off by Highgate and Finchley. On that common he picked up KEYES, who parted from him at Turvey. Pursuing his course, he came up with his great Ideal, CATESBY, at Brickhill, with whom was John Wright. Soon afterwards they overtook Percy and Christopher Wright, and the exhausted five arrived by six o'clock in the evening. ROOKWOOD had actually ridden 80 miles since noon. On the night of the 7th they were at Holbeach, Warwickshire where our Suffolk man participated in the agony and terror caused by the explosion of the powder which had been placed before the fire to dry.

CONTD.-----

This catastrophe converted him and some of his companions, who, 'perceiving God to be against them, prayed before the picture of Our Lady, and confessed that the act was so bloody, as they desired God to forgive them'.

The day of the execution was JANUARY 31st 1606.

ALL HIS REMAINING ESTATES WERE FORFEITED.

To this end bigotry brought the boy who had sported with his brothers so often in the new and spacious chambers of COLDHAM HALL, STANNINGFIELD.

Ambrose had two sons and his heir was ROBERT who was an infant at the time of his Father's death.

He was forced for his livelihood to be a farmer on the lands that his Father and Grand Father originally owned. In 1624 there was an ironical twist in his life because he was Knighted by James 1st at Royston ----the same monarch who executed his Father.

On 15th June 1635 Sir Robert was taken to court to answer for the non payment of debts on his family's forfeited estates. He sought the sympathy of the court, 'he having had sixteen children and ten of them living all young and utterly unprovided for, his wife now with child and by God's blessing like to have many more''

Fortune improved and on 4th May 1638 he took a lease of various Manors, including Stanningfield Hall and Coldham Hall for 21 years at £250 per annum. He died in 1679 and was buried in Stanningfield Church.

His son Ambrose married Elizabeth Caldwell from Dunton, Essex and they had 13 children one of which was also executed for treason. BRIG. GENERAL AMBROSE ROOKWOOD was one of James II guards and he headed a band of nine or ten men in an attack on one flank of William of Oranges body guards while others attacked on the flank and the rear. Sir Robert Barclay was the head of the plot, but it failed and Ambrose was one of the first to be arrested, but the last to be executed.

At Tyburn in 1696 he delivered to the Sheriff this his last dying speech and confession:-

I do with all truth and sincerity declare and avow I never knew, saw, or heard of any order or commission from King James, for the assassination of Prince of Orange, and attacking his guards; but I am certainly informed he had

rejected proposals of that nature when made unto him. Nor do I think he knew the least of the particular design for attacking the guards at his landing, in which I was engaged as a soldier, by my immediate commander (much against my judgement); but his soldier I was, and as such I was to obey and act. Near twelve years I have served my true King and master, King James II and freely now lay down my life in his cause. I ever abhorred a treacherous action to an enemy. If it be a guilt to have complied with what I thought, and still think to have been my duty, I am guilty. No other guilt do I own. As I beg of all to forgive me, so I forgive all from my heart, even the Prince of Orange, who, as a soldier, ought to have considered my case before he signed the warrant for my death. I pray God to open his eyes, and render him sensible of the much blood, from all parts, crying out against him, so to prevent a heavier execution hanging over his head, than what he inflicts on me. ---

THOMAS, the brother of the Prig. General, was the last male Rookwood and he is buried in the sanctuary of the Church, to the North side of the Altar. His daughter, Elizabeth married John Gage, 2nd son of Sir Wm Gage of Hengrave Hall. They are buried in the Church to the South side of the Altar.

It is said that John propagated and named the 'GREEN GAGE' however it is more probable that he discovered the fruit by chance. It is said that he was interested in horticulture and imported several kinds of plum trees from France. These arrived duly labelled and were planted. However, one bundle of these small fruit trees had lost its label and the gardeners were hard put to it to give the tree a name. The trees became known as Gage's trees, and when one particularly fine and luscious plum of a green colour lacked a name it was called a green Gage.

This Guide, which was written 20 years ago in 1979 is now due for revision for issue in 2,000 A.D. If you have any relevant new information about the Church for possible inclusion, please contact one of the Church Wardens.