

Pilgrimage 2022;Part 2 - Waltham and Hatfield

Waltham: Wednesday afternoon, 31st August

The Abbey Church of Waltham Holy Cross and St Lawrence is the parish church of the town of Waltham Abbey, Essex, England. It has been a place of worship since the 7th century.

Waltham Abbey is an interesting chartered town in Essex. It began as a Roman settlement then early Saxon Kings maintained a hunting lodge and the town formed around these. The Waltham Abbey church is the remainder of the whole abbey which, true to form, was subjected to the reformation. It was the last abbey to be visited by Henry VIII and he left the church part to be the parish church because the monks and nuns put up no opposition and the residents requested it be left. Not surprising really as they had obviously heard what had happened everywhere else!



The first church was built around the 6th or 7th century. It was a small, simple wooden church possibly similar to St Andrew's Greensted, made from split tree trunks.

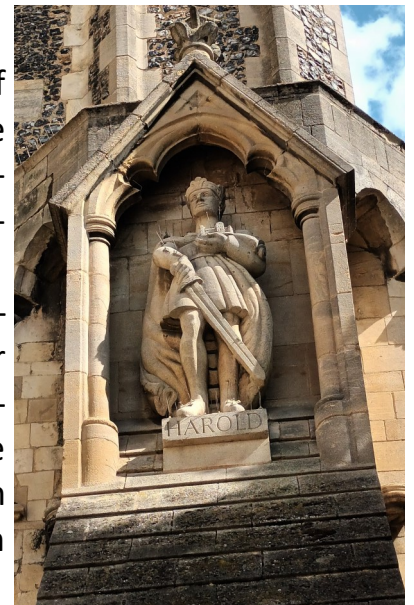
The second church on site was about 790 AD and was the first stone church. Tovi brought the Holy Cross to this church in the 11th Century.

The third church was built 1053-1060 by Earl Harold. It had aisles and an eastern transept. A few fragments of this church remain. It was commissioned to house a miraculous cross. Earl Harold (the Battle of Hastings King Harold II) rebuilt the church in stone as a gesture of gratitude as he believed the cross had answered his prayers and cured him of a paralysis.

So, a bit about Harold.

Harold II – The last crowned king of orthodox England
Harold was the son of Godwin, (Harold Godwinsson) Earl of Wessex and Gytha Thorkelsdottir, sister in law of Canute (King of England and Denmark), born in 1022 and died October 14th 1066 on Senlac Ridge in Sussex at the Battle of Hastings.

Harold's family was quite heavily into intrigue, plotting, murder and changing sides, some were exiled because of their ruthless streak and he probably wasn't a very pleasant person. Having said that neither was William but as the 'winner' we can assume William was more ruthless than Harold and better at judging where weakness lay and then exploiting it.



After he died at the Battle of Hastings Harold's body was brought back to Waltham for burial and is commemorated by a stone slab in the churchyard.



After the Norman Conquest the church was rebuilt circa 1090-1150. The nave is similar to Durham Cathedral. William gave Harold's Waltham estates to the Bishop of Durham. The nave of this church is still standing today as the present parish church and has typically Norman style columns and three tiers of arches.

The church was re-founded as a priory by Henry II in 1177 (as part of the penance for the death of Thomas a Beckett) then as an Augustinian Abbey in 1184, and was dedicated in 1242. In the 14th century the Guild Chapel was added and the western towers taken down. The Abbey was one of the largest in the country, about three times larger than the current parish church and was demolished soon after it was dissolved in 1540. Ironically Waltham Abbey was where Henry VIII and his advisors planned the Reformation of every other establishment before finishing with Waltham Abbey. As previously mentioned, the nave was left standing because it was the parish church not part of the abbey and the central tower was left to be a bell tower. It collapsed soon after and the present tower was built in the 1550s.

The church is mostly Norman in construction with typical Norman arches but the east wall is Victorian.



The ceiling is also Victorian, painted in 1860 by Edward Poynter, and the central panels show the 12 months of the year with the astrological symbols and their labours. The various pictures also have a Christian explanation.



Virgo the Virgin symbolises the creation of Mankind. As the Mother of Christ she reminds us of his humanity. She holds the symbols of Justice as she is our mediator. The labour is the grape harvest, from which comes wine, symbol of the Blood of Christ.



The ornate tomb is that of Robert Smith, captain of a merchant ship, who died in 1697, decorated with nautical symbols.



The Lady Chapel is now a visitor centre and home to the early 15th Century 'Doom' painting of the Day of Judgement (discovered in the 19th Century).

The Denny Monument dates from 1600. The Denny family acquired Abbey lands from the Crown after the dissolution.



There are two memorials for the World Wars.



The rose window (the theme of creation) and the three lancet Jesse windows (the left and right lancets show patriarchs and prophets, the centre panel shows the descent of Jesus from Jesse, father of King David) were designed by Burne-Jones. The reredos has scenes from the Nativity and the strip above it features two of Aesop's fables and the Lamb. Both were designed by William Burges and were added in the 1870s.



The font dates from the 12th Century and was remodelled in the 19th Century.
The tower was erected in the reign of Mary Tudor and houses a ring of 14 bells.



Some visible remains of the Old Augustinian Abbey include the Chapter House and Precinct Walls, Cloister Entry (right) and the Gateway in the Abbey Gardens (left). The large arch was for wheeled traffic and the small arch was for pedestrians .



Famous People associated with Waltham Abbey

Tovi (Tofig the Proud) was the standard bearer for King Canute who brought the Holy Cross from Somerset to Waltham

Harold Godwinsson (Harold II) built the third church on the site and founded the college of secular canons c.1060, was killed at the Battle of Hastings 1066 and brought to Waltham for burial.

King Henry II financed the expansion of the collegiate church and refounded it, first as a priory and then as an abbey of Augustinian canons.

King Henry VIII had a dispute with the Pope which resulted in the establishment of the Church of England and the Dissolution of the Monasteries.

Thomas Cranmer was Archbishop of Canterbury at the time of the Dissolution and had family connections in Waltham.

Thomas Tallis, the “Father of English Church Music” was organist at the Abbey until 1540

Sir Anthony Denny was a Gentleman of the Bedchamber to Henry VIII and executor of his will and guardian of the young King Edward VI, who leased the site of the Abbey after the Dissolution.

Sir Edward Denny The son of Sir Anthony Denny, whose monument in the grand style is at the east end of the south aisle

Thomas Fuller: Vicar of Waltham 1648-1658, author of “The Worthies of England”. After six years at Waltham he published his “Church History”, “History of Cambridge” and “History of Waltham Abbey”, the first history of an Essex parish to be published.

The Greenwich Meridian

It was in the 18th Century that an Englishman, a Yorkshire clockmaker named John Harrison, cracked the problem of how to track longitude at any point in the world. He had essentially solved it by 1735 but it took him the rest of his life to have his work acknowledged. Greenwich, London, home of the Royal Observatory and office of the Astronomer Royal, was where all such inventions and theories were evaluated. It was from here that news of Harrison's breakthrough spread to maritime nations around the world. His chronometers are still on display at the National Maritime Museum.

The town is on the Greenwich meridian (it separates east from west the same way the equator separates north and south). It was established by the Astronomer Royal, Sir George Airy, in 1851. Its path is determined by the path of an historic telescope, the Airy Transit Circle, housed at the Royal Observatory in Greenwich. In 1884 it was selected by an international conference as the common zero of longitude and standard of time reckoning throughout the world. On its path between the north and south poles the Meridian Line passes through France, Spain, Algeria, Mali, Burkina Faso, Togo, Ghana and Antarctica as well as Waltham Abbey town. A mosaic tiled strip runs across Sun Street to mark the Meridian's location so you can stand with one foot in the east and one foot in the west. The meridian also runs through the grounds of the old abbey but is harder to find. The mosaic was designed by Essex born mosaic artist Paul Siggins.



We had time to look round the town and have our lunch. Pubs did feature in the refreshments! Some of us visited the museum which was small but very friendly, and free. Next door was the library where there was a textile exhibition. They had all been

done by local people and were very impressive. Margaret of York (sister of Edward IV and Richard III) was born here 3rd May 1446. Then we all had a cream tea at 'The Olive Branch' on our way back to the coach. Our evening was dinner, Compline and Quiz.



Hatfield—Thursday morning 1st September

St Ethelreda's Church Bishop's Hatfield.

This is located next to Hatfield House and the location was incredible.

In around 970 King Edgar the Peaceful presented the Manor of Hatfelle to the Benedictine Monastery of Ely. In 1108 when the Abbey of Ely became a bishopric Hatfield became one of the Bishop of Ely's residence and the name, Bishop's Hatfield.

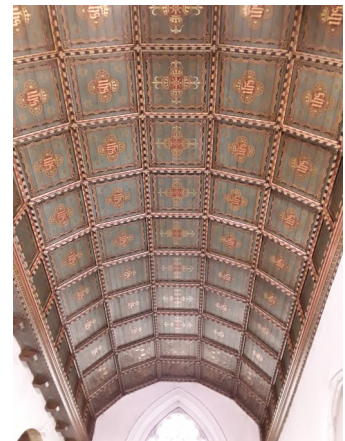
It flourished thanks to Ely and a palace was built adjacent to the church, part of which remains today. After the Dissolution of the monasteries Hatfield passed to the Crown in 1538. The Bishop's Palace became a royal nursery as Princesses Mary, Elizabeth and Prince Edward all at one time lived there so they may have worshipped in the church.

It changed hands again in 1607 when James I (James VI Scotland) swapped it for another property belonging to Robert Cecil, Lord Salisbury. The Cecils have been closely linked to the Parish since that time.

The Church exterior



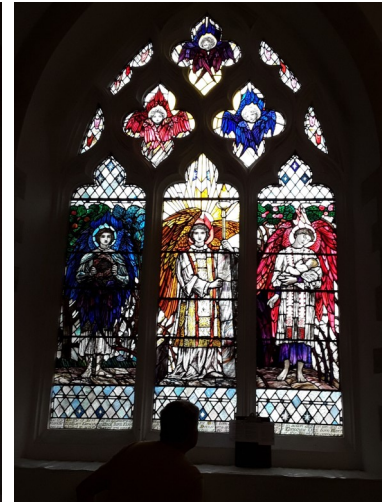
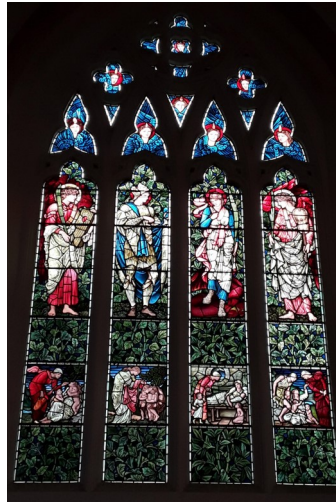
Church Interior and ceilings



Salisbury Chapel and Altar



**Stained Glass including
Burne Jones Window**



Salisbury Chapel tombs

Robert Cecil, 1st Earl of Salisbury



Life effigy, top level,

Death effigy, lower level, Close up of face



Tomb of William Curl,



Effigy of an unknown knight

St Ethelreda

It seems more biographies have been written about Ethelreda than any other female saint in the medieval period and she has 13 ancient churches dedicated to her including Bishop's Hatfield.

She was a Saxon princess born in Suffolk in the 630s. She was very devout and made a vow of chastity at an early age which her husband apparently respected. He died only 3 years after they were married and she retired to the Isle of Ely (part of her dowry) to a life of asceticism and prayer. After 5 years she was willed into a political marriage with the 15yr old Ecgrith, son of the King of Northumbria. She agreed on condition she could remain a virgin. After 12 years of marriage Ecgrith, now king, wanted to break the pact. She retreated first to the convent of Coldingham, receiving the veil from her husband's aunt, the abbess St Ebba, and then, fearing pursuit she fled back to Ely dressed as a beggar. Here she began construction of a double monastery for both monks and nuns on the site of the present day cathedral. She was installed as abbess and spent the rest of her life in piety and austerity, dying from plague in 679. Sixteen years later Saint Sexburga (Ethelreda's sister and successor as abbess) exhumed the body. The corpse was completely incorrupt, no decay was visible, even the linen grave clothes were intact. Her body was translated into the monastery church for veneration in 696. Devotion to her spread rapidly and she became one of the most revered early English saints. In the early 12th Century construction began on the present Ely cathedral and her body was moved again. It was still recorded as being totally preserved.

Throughout the medieval period Saint Ethelreda, also known as St Audrey, was celebrated with a fair that coincided with her feast day. These fairs became synonymous with the sale of cheap and showy wares giving rise to the word 'tawdry' as a contraction of saint and Audrey.

The December magazine will report on the final instalment at St Albans and St James, Stanstead Abbots.