



**History
of the
Parish and Church**

**ST GILES
Colchester**

Historical Notes on the Church & Parish of St. Giles, Colchester

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Note – This record of St. Giles’s Church and Parish was commissioned by Mr. Reginald B. Beard J.P., for his friend, the late Rev. E.W. Hartley Parker, M.A. former Rector of the parish, and publication is by Mr. Beard’s kind permission. This transcript is dated between 1931 and when the church closed in 1954.

THE PARISH OF ST. GILES is the largest of the twelve urban parishes of Colchester. It covers 1,501 acres, the whole south side of the town, from Rowhedge and the Colne on the east to Reed Hall on the Layer Road westward, and is bounded on the north by Berechurch. It has long been the most populous parish in the borough.

It may represent the property of some Saxon thane, but Domesday takes no notice of parochial divisions, being only concerned with fiscal questions. We may surmise that some thirty or forty of the burgesses, with their families, cultivated their five-acre plots in the common fields in the days of Edward the Confessor, and found sustenance for their sheep and cattle on the heath, and pannage for their pigs in the dense woods which covered both Donylands. Nor must we overlook the forefathers of our world-famous Colne navigators, the sailors, whose boats carried on what exterior trade there was when roads were hardly known. The hamlet we now call Old Heath is really the ancient “hithe” of harbour which Britons, Romans and Saxons had used for over a thousand years till the Normans found it profitable to bring their vessels up the river to the new “hithe,” now the parish of St. Leonard, deserting the old harbour.

The Saxon Church was well organised under its bishops, and although we know little of the people at this date, the parish must have been represented at the Law Hundred Court of Colchester, thrice yearly, by its mass-priest, its reeve and four chosen men. Seven priests are named in Domesday. Where the earliest church of wattle and daub was situated we cannot say, but with the advent of Eudo, William the Conqueror’s steward, we reach firmer ground.

THE BENEDICTINE ABBEY OF ST. JOHN BAPTIST

An ancient chronicler records that Eudo, who was given charge of the City, as it was then styled, by William Rufus, had gained the goodwill of the burgesses by his clemency and careful consideration of their grievances. Now, Eudo, who was practically chief minister of the Crown under the Conqueror and his sons, was both an able ruler and a good churchman. Though only the younger son of a small landowner in Normandy whose family had won the favour of the Duke, he had married the grand-daughter of Walter Giffard, created Earl of Buckinghamshire, one of the most powerful of the new Norman nobility. The Lady Rose, whose name survives at Royston in Herts., was as devout as she was beautiful, and shared her husband’s care for the welfare of those over whom fortune had placed them. Thus, maybe, she was stirred when, after a long day’s hunting of the polecat, she rested on the dais in the great hall of the Stone House in the High Street, by the story of the strange experiences of Siric, the Saxon priest. He had long ministered in a little church of rough planks which served for his simple flock, and, with a chamber attached, afforded him a home. It stood on the northern slope of the hill still overlooking the town, and was dedicated to St. John the Evangelist. The townsmen, attracted by his devout serving at Mass and the unaffected fervour of his discourse, often crowded it. So it seems only natural, in an uncritical age, that stories of the marvellous attached themselves to the little shrine – that at night mysterious lights were to be seen in the church, and sweet strains of angelic voices heard, and even in broad daylight, at the sacring of

the Holy Food, the iron chains of a townsman, fettered by royal command, fell clattering to the ground.

As Eudo pondered over these reports, the conviction grew on him that here was the site for an undertaking he had long contemplated - the foundation of an abbey where Almighty God might be worshipped with due solemnity, and men's lives devoted to sacred learning. There was none such in Essex, but in his Norman home "a powerful man thought that he laid himself open to mockery if he did not help clerks, or monks, on his lands with the things needful for God's warfare." So on the Feast of the Decollation of St. John the Baptist, August 29th, 1095, the ground was plotted out, and at the following Easter the foundation stones were solemnly blessed by his friend Maurice, Bishop of London, and well and duly laid by Eudo, the lady Rohesia, Earl Gilbert de Clare, her brother, and other magnates. Siric doubtless was present, and possibly his church served for the community till their own was ready. Its memory was long preserved in the official seal of the Abbey, though Eudo chose St. John the Forerunner for his patron in preference to the Beloved Disciple. The career of Eudo has no immediate connection the parish of St. Giles, so we need not here narrate his difficulties and disappointments. It will be sufficient to say that after five troubled years he saw Hugh, a monk from York, solemnly ordained as abbot by his friend, Bishop Maurice.

Thirteen years later, on 10th February, 1116, the completed church was consecrated in the presence of Queen Maud and a large gathering of prelates and nobles by Richard, Bishop of London, and Herbert, Bishop of Norwich and founder of its Cathedral.

THE CHURCH OF ST. GILES

With great probability we may refer the origin of the present church of St. Giles to the next few years. It is not easy to associate with the brave and masterful race who now ruled England and much of France keen appreciation for the virtues of humility and self-effacement, yet two of the most popular dedications for churches at this date were to St. Leonard, a hermit in northern France, and to St. Giles, whose cell was on an affluent of the Rhone in the south. The latter is usually designated an abbot from the famous monastery which after his death was built over the rude cave where his piety and wisdom won such wide affection. The well-known legend made such an appeal to Norman lovers of the chase tells how a king of the Franks, pursuing a startled hind through the forest, saw it disappear in a gloomy cavern, and hastily discharging an arrow, followed, only to find he had wounded a venerable man by whose side the hind had taken refuge. Enquiries revealed to him the hermit's reputation, and struck by his wisdom he tried to tempt him to his court, but Giles soon found that kings' houses and soft raiment were not for him, and gladly returned to his hermitage. Here he died 1st September, 714, the date on which he is commemorated in both Anglican and Roman Calendars. His memory was an inspiration for over four centuries, and some hundred and fifty English churches are dedicated in his honour to the worship of God. Queen Maud founded one of the most famous, St Giles in the Fields, St. Giles, Cripplegate, soon following. In Essex we find Hallingbury and Langford, both connected with Eudo's relatives, dedicated to St. Giles, as well as Orsett, Maplestead and Rainham. This last is today almost unchanged, a pure Norman church with an apsidal chancel, such as St. Giles, Colchester, probably had.

To attempt a history of the famous abbey of St John is not possible here; where we are concerned only with the humble parish church built within the precincts by the abbot for his tenants and lay neighbours. Under the second abbot, Gilbert, a monk of Bec and prior to Evremond in Normandy, chosen by King Henry I, to succeed Hugh, we have our earliest notice of the present church. By a disastrous fire in 1133 the little wooden church, the newly built monastery, and a large part of the town timber built and thatches were destroyed. To the

rebuilding which followed we owe the rubble south wall of the nave, in which one may see a round-headed Norman window, arched with those Roman tiles, the stock of which must by this have been nearly exhausted.

An incident of this date, in reign of King Stephen or perhaps his predecessor, Henry I., supplies us with the name of the earliest priest to whom we can allot a Colchester parish. A certain William of Amavilla and Richolda, his wife who had an estate at Finborough, near Stowmarket, gave part of it to the abbey. Among the with witnesses present were Ralf, dean of Finborough, Gilbert, presbyter of St. Giles, Colchester with Gaufrid and Osbern, nephews of abbot Gilbert. Serfdom then and long after prevailed, and we read that William took Wietrie, the tenant of the land, by the hand and offered him, on the altar of St. John, with his tenure of his dues of ten shillings annually, half of the Feast of St. Michael and half on the Annunciation of St. Mary. A generation later, we have further evidence that the church was in being, when on 1st April 1179, Pope Alexander III., among other properties, confirmed to the abbey the church of St. Giles, described as in "the cemetery of the monastery."

The emoluments of the living now belonged to the abbot and convent, and it became what is styled a "donative," or perpetual curacy: thus the incumbents' names fail to appear in the episcopal registers. The chancel, now almost entirely modern, was built in the reign of Henry III. The setting of one window in the south aisle and the north doorway still remain as evidence of this century of vivid church life. We get another sidelight on the church in 1254 under this King, when Pope Nicholas imposed a bitterly resented tax on all English livings. The rectory of St. Giles was reckoned to be worth forty shillings a year, only three in the town being higher. This might represent some £100 in present values, and for a celibate priest, when sheep could be bought for 4d., was quite adequate. Difficult as it was still to persuade the parochial clergy that holy matrimony was not permissible for them, the abbot surely allowed no laxity at his gates. Yet in other respects the chaplain, as by episcopal directions he now became, must have found life full of incident. The annual four days' fair on St. John's Green, only abolished within living memory, brought together a vast concourse, bent on trade and pleasure, varied by occasional riots and bloodshed between townsmen and the abbey retainers. In 1272 a man accused of theft was willed and buried in the church, the town and country coroners quarrelling as to the right to hold the inquest. A rector in the days of Edward II, was the victim of a gang of desperadoes who twice broke into the Abbey and stole vestments and ornaments. They were led by a chaplain and a clerk, who one June evening entered the church of St. Giles and stole a silver chalice valued at 10s. and a book valued at 40s., a large sum then, the property of Adam, the chaplain. A taxation of the town about this time tells us something of the parishioners, of Thomas the herd, who had charge of Robert Bataille's cattle in his "wick," still known as Battleswick, of William Blackinthemouth (sic), who had a lawsuit with him, of Roger Juscard the coal merchant, Rafe St. Leger the butcher, and Robert the mustarder, all well-to-do men. Old Heath was represented by John Hust, who had a quay at New Hyth, John de Peldon and Richard atte Wyth, sailors, and John Downing and Simon Lyger, fishermen, all parishioners of Master Adam.

After the ravages of the Black Death a period of prosperity set in under Richard II. The parishioners built the north aisle, whose windows still retain their stone-work, removing the Norman wall, and giving more space for the processions which the growing wealth and taste of the age demanded. Neither pews nor chairs were then in use. Usually on Sunday the people came to Matins and Prime, which the priest said at seven o'clock, and, unless away from home, to the parish Mass which was sung at nine o'clock. After evening song at three, they were free to enjoy their sports and pastimes, including the use of the long bow at the butts in Holmer Lane, now Butt Road, as enjoined by statute. When they had duly made confession in Lent, received the Blessed Sacrament at Easter, and paid their tithes, they were entitled to consider themselves good Catholic Christians, rejoicing to see their church furnished with all the rich

accessories of Medieval worship. Did the turbulent priest of York, John Ball, lead the insurgents who over ran the town and neighbourhood and preach socialism on the Green to them?

“When Adam delved and Eve span,
Who was then the gentleman?”

It was well known that Wiclif's doctrines found considerable support in this neighbourhood. An inquisition was held at Colchester on the Monday before the Feast of the Purification 1414, before the Earl of Oxford and other Royal Commissioners, with a jury comprising bailiffs and aldermen, including several parishioners of St. Giles. They report that:-

“William Chilton, layman, John Andrews, cordwainer, and two others, with John Wells, parish clerk (i.e. Rector) of St. Giles, have several books in English and are accustomed to read them in each other's houses, both secretly and openly. What the books contain they profess no knowledge of.”

This was about the time of the abortive rising of Sir John Oldcastle, the Lollard leader, and the various findings of the Commission show no desire to press harshly on these precursors of the Reformation, even then inevitable, though delayed a century.

During the fifteenth century we find no further changes in the fabric of St Giles Church, and the history of the parish is practically a blank. The great Abbey seems to absorb all other interests. It was a wealthy corporation, with large and widely scattered estates to manage, including Middlewick and Monkwick. The Abbot sat in the House of Lords, with the bishops and barons, and travelled to and fro like a great secular peer. Early in the century Abbott Geoffrey Story built just above the church the stately gateway, sole memorial of his abbey's vanished glory. His ecclesiastical status was enhanced by the bestowal of the Mitre, and alike in synods and politics the abbots aspired to play a leading part, not without some danger to their necks. The four and twenty monks well born and educated, followed, more or less strictly the rule of St. Benedict, though the golden age of monasticism had passed. The humble rector of St. Giles could watch the glimmer of their lanterns soon after midnight each day as they made their way to the chill but stately Norman choir to sing Matins and Prime. With brief intervals there followed Terce, Sext and Nones, each with its appropriate psalms and lessons, till the day ended and the busy world was hushed with the strains of Vespers and Compline, all based on the Psalmist's practice, “Seven times a day do I praise Thee”. The only service in which the congregation was composed of others than the monks was the High Mass, sung at nine o'clock, frequented by devoted townsmen, lay brethren and servants. Study, recreation and routine administration, not to mention the meals, with their alternations of fast and festival, hardly encouraged the ideal of a lazy life and by nine o'clock all was quiet. Possibly the Abbot's parlour on occasion held a merry party of aldermen and neighbouring gentry, who enjoyed the rich pasties, generous wine and sparkling talk. The Green attracted some wealthy clothiers, among them Alderman John Sumpter, member for the Borough under Henry VI., whose gold signet ring was picked up some years since on his estate at Layer Marney. The wills of parishioners afford us less than the usual information. John Gosselyn, in 1465 under Edward IV., includes St. Giles among eight churches to which he left legacies, and a similar amount to the monks. Drew Lyle in 1475 left legacies to the Abbey, where he held some lay office, and “6s. 8d. to St. Giles, my parish church.” To John Barbour, his servant, he left a long black gown lined with black “bekrume” and a short one of green, called a “sloppe.” To Barbour's wife, Agnes, “a russet gown and 6s. 8d. “and mattresses, luxuries hardly known then.

In 1497 Robert Rokewode, a landowner in Suffolk and Colchester, desires to be buried in his parish church of St. Giles, to which he leaves 6s. 8d. for "tithes negligently forgotten" "- a conventional formula".

For nearly four hundred years the Breton family had been benefactors to the Abbey, and in 1499 William Breton, gentleman, desired the new Abbot's permission to be buried there by his father, and gave him "all such money as he oweth me which appears in the account of the Balywick of Greenestede." He, too, left to the parish church of St. Giles, "where I was late a parishioner, for tithes forgotten 3s. 4d." "My land called Marhill in Wyvenhoe to be put in feoffment and the church wardens of the parish of St. Giles to receive and take the farm and profits yearly, value 19s 4d., with which I will that they keep an anniversary for my grandfather, father, mother, Aunt Alice, certain friends and for me and my wife on the day of my decease, yearly. To the curate to remember the said souls in the pulpit every Sunday, and once a week in his mass, 4s. To the parish clerk for ringing the bell, 6d. To the sexton for his horse 3d. and every year a mass penny. To every churchwarden for their labours to see my obit yearly done 8d. Residue of the 19s. 4d. to go in reparation of the church. He also left 2s. for bread and ale at the keeping in his obit, for the space of 50 years, when in any case the religious changes would have swept away both it and the churchwardens' perquisites.

William Tey and John Tey, wealthy squires also founded obits at this date, and they, or the Breton family, were the probable founders of the final addition to the fabric of the church, the chapel at the east end of the north aisle, which antiquaries assign to the beginning of the 16th Century. About this time the priest's door in the south wall and the brick south porch were added, and possibly the tower, as to which no evidence of origin remains, though the reference to the bell shows it then existed.

Robert Britiff, gentleman, in 1521 asks to be buried in the chancel, "the curate to have for the breaking of the ground there 10s." and the usual 3s. 4d. for tithes and oblations forgotten, also an additional 3s. 4d. for "the church" and 10s. for an honest priest to sing a trentall (30) of masses "for my soul and all Christian souls."

Great changes were witnessed in the next generation. On 7th July, 1534, Mr George Dedham, the third rec. or to be known by name in three centuries, walked to the Moot Hall, followed by over one hundred householders of St. Giles, to take the oath recognising the Lady Anne as the lawful wife of Henry VIII. Prominent among them were Mr. John Abel, the rich clothier, who built the porch of Nayland Church, and Mr. Thomas Flyngaunt, whose brother was also an Alderman. We may be sure that however many secretly sympathised with Queen Catherine, who only a few years before had made her famous visit to the Abbey in great state, few dared absent themselves.

Even greater changes were at hand, for within five years the last Abbott of Colchester, Blessed Thomas Beehe, was arrested, taken to London and charged with high treason, brought back for a so-called trial at Colchester before the Earl of Essex, and then hanged before the Abbey gate on 1st December, 1539. The pillage and destruction of the abbey church followed, the monks were pensioned off, and some doubtless worshipped for many years in St. Giles Church, which itself soon witnessed many alterations in ceremonial.

The latest will of the older order is that of "Rose Danyell", widow of William Daniell, a well-to-do wheelwright and Free Burgess, proved in 1540. She desires to be buried in the church, to the repairs of which she leaves 3s. 4d. and 12d. to the high altar for tithes forgotten. To her four children under age, William, Richard, John and Rose, flock beds with all belonging thereunto, brass pots and "ketylls," two platters, two "dyshes," saucers and "one angell of gold money" each. To John Ewryng, of Middle Mill, whose wife Helen was a victim in the

shocking religious persecutions under Mary, 20s., to Joane Dynes, the town clerk's daughter, "13s. 4d. at my month's mynde and a red kyrtil." To Thomas Semans a flock bed, pair of sheets, "covered brass pott," 2 plates, 2 dishes and a saucer. To widow Snellyng, "my best rayle" (night rayle – dressing gown, as in Alderman Winsley's monument). "Also unto mother in gold a chain (?)" Residue to son William Daniell, sole executor. The benefaction of this lady's descendant, Alderman Jeremiah Daniell, still keeps his memory green among the poor folk of St. Giles.

Among the returns made to Edward VI. of church goods irregularly disposed of by churchwardens is one from St. Giles by Richard Stampe, John Thompson and John Bowyer (why three?), churchwardens, who "doo say that they have sold as much yron belonging to the said church as came to IX shillings, which they bestowed in whyte lyminge the said church." Nothing is said as to crucifixes, pyxes, plate or vestments which other Colchester parishes had disposed of. Possibly the parish retained them as long as they could; if so, it was a vain hope, for the Royal Commissioners, a year or two later, stripped the churches of everything but the barest essentials for divine worship.

Though whitewashed walls may have symbolized a purer doctrine, yet both for old and young much of the warmth and joy of religion passed away when the lay folk could no longer repeat from their mass books the familiar prayer:

"This world that turneth many ways
Make good to us in all our days;
The weather that is so unstable,
Lord, make it good and seasonable.
The fruits of earth make plenteous,
As thou seest best, ordain for us.
Such grace to us, we pray Thee send,
As in our last day, at the end,
When this world and we shall sever
Many bring us to joys that last for ever.

THE CLASH OF IDEALS

The following century was one of great religious disturbance. The Rectors after the Dissolution of the Abbey were John Fraunceys and Thomas Awger, former monks of St. John's, drawing life pensions. Instead of singing the Latin mass, they sang King Edward's English mass to Merbecke's music, read Tyndale's matchless translation of the Bible, and intoned the early Catholic collects which Archbishop Cranmer's fine taste has preserved for us. They made us few changes in the former ritual as possible, their congregation was well inclined to the old ways – though with no love for the Pope – and for many years there were occasional complaints from the authorities as the town grew more puritanically inclined, while "prayer and fasting were disregarded."

The social upheaval wrought by the destruction of the Abbey was soon apparent. Sir Francis Jobson, member for the borough and an active servant of Henry VIII., obtained possession of the site of the Abbey and of the manor of Monkwick in Berechurch, where Lord Audley had also acquired estates. He retained Monkwick, but in 1548 sold the Abbey lands to John Lucas, sometime town clerk of Colchester, and now one of the borough members. He too, had been a chief agent, possibly a reluctant one, in the seizure of church goods and the many small endowments which had formerly gone to relieve distress and educate the poor. From the stones of the despoiled Abbey he built a stately mansion, where he died in 1556.

Rector Awger reverted to the old Service Books when Queen Mary came to the throne, and like everybody else the new squires found little difficulty in conforming. It is satisfactory to note that of the thirteen Colchester victims of the cruel religious executions none are recorded in this parish. When Elizabeth reached the throne the bewildered priest and people reverted to the English rite. A new rector occurs in 1574, appointed by Sir Francis Jobson, now Master of the Jewel House. This was Richard Spencer, a graduate of the newly-founded Caius College, Cambridge, in 1563, who also served as curate of Greenstead. This college was mainly supported by those favouring the older tradition. He may have officiated in February, 1570, when Sir Francis Jobson was brought from Monkwick to rest in the chancel with all the heraldic pomp due to his connection with the royal House of York.

Ten years later the struggle between Anglicans and Puritans was at its height, and the authorities in Church and State took strong action on behalf of uniformity against both papists and sectaries. The rector of St. Giles, probably of a Colchester family, was William Cock. He joined some of the local clergy who endeavoured to make the church Presbyterian, ignored the bishop, and refused to use the Book of Common Prayer or wear the surplice. They met periodically to discuss the morals of their parishioners, led by the Vicars of St. Peter's and of Dedham, both learned and zealous, but intolerant. Cock signed a petition to the Bailiffs, of Colchester asking them to cut down the local Maypole, and forbid the usual festivities. This, being no Puritans, they declined to do, and through their persistent non conformity the bishop had no option but to suspend Cock and the others, but, perhaps persuaded by his wife the young man saw reason, and conformed for we find he died in possession of his living in 1619.

Thomas Lucas, Recorder and Town Clerk, knighted by Elizabeth, who visiting him at the Abbey House, was an active magistrate, but unpopular, as a proud, nasty and quarrelsome man. Possibly his views did not square with those of the rising school of thought, since his wife came of a Catholic family. Sir Thomas died in 1611 aged 80, and his wife followed him two years later. In 1579 the great Queen stayed at his mansion, and five years later he entertained her favourite, a General, the Earl of Leicester, on his way to the Netherlands to fight Philip of Spain. The despoiled monument in the north wall of the Lucas Chapel once held their effigies. Their heir, Thomas Lucas, followed and the Abbey House for more than 30 years became the home of one of the wealthiest and most cultured families in the kingdom, of whom it was said "all the men were brave and all the women chaste." The eldest son, John knighted, and after suffering great losses in the royal cause was created Baron Lucas of Shenfield. Another, Sir Thomas, was seated at Lexden Manor, while a third, Sir Charles Lucas, one of the finest cavalry leaders in the Civil War, met a hero's death when Colchester was captured by Sir Thomas Fairfax after the Siege in 1648. St John's Green once more saw a royal cavalcade in 1632, when the Queen Dowager of France spent a Sunday at the Abbey House, and among the six fair daughters of the house met Margaret, afterwards the famous Duchess of Newcastle, who lies in Westminster Abbey.

The rector at this time was Samuel Cock, son of the late rector, born in Colchester in 1591. At a visitation made by Mr. Theophilus Roberts, rector of St. Nicholas, on 31st August, 1633, John Symons and John Woodrule, town councillor, being churchwardens, the verdict was as follows:-

"Their church wants glazing.

"The pillars of the windowes on the north side are broken and want repayinge.

"The walls on the south want repayinge and plaisteringe.

"The seats want bordering in their bottomes.

"They want the Book of Homilies and the Book of Canons, and a hood for their minister.

"The chauncell walls want repayinge and plaisteringe, it wants pavinge, and the seats want pavinge or bordinge."

The churchwardens are admonished “to provide the ornaments and books before Hallowmas’ next, and to do the reparaeons before Easter Day and to certify the next court following. Mr Cock hath the same Easter time for his chancel.” These matters do not seem very serious, and were doubtless attended to. Nevertheless trouble was in store for the rector, a graduate of Pembroke College, Cambridge, a parish priest whose views coincided with the revived church feeling of his day.

The Colchester mob, led by some of its magistrates, who should have known better, were incensed at the support given to the King by the Lucas family. They pillaged the mansion, even maltreating the ladies of the family, and desecrated the tombs in St. Giles’s church. After two more trouble years, having got rid of most of the loyal clergy, they took Mr. Cock in hand, and made the following absurd charges against him. The witnesses swore “that he was unable for the ministry. We desire that he may be tried by some judicious diviner, Mr Owen, of Fordham, and holy Mr Ellis of St. Peter’s” (an independent), Obviously after twenty-five years in Orders he was incompetent (!) or seemed so, for

“I do not like thee, Dr Fell,
The reason why I cannot tell.”

The indictment continues: “That he hath of late taken another cure and resides there” – no details: possibly it refers to the fact that he kept a school at Wormingford – “that at the last Sacrament, when he had delivered the bread, and before he delivered the wine, he read on the Litany (sic) the conclusion of the service, till the clerk put him in mind he had not delivered the wine.”

Apparently an isolated instance of absentmindedness in a much worried man.

Two witnesses deposed “that he had enforced the late innovations, compelling the parishioners to come to the rails, persecuting them to excommunication.” No reasons given – doubtless some objected to his efforts towards seemliness in worship. And lastly “that he did not prepare the people to take the covenant.” As he was obviously no Calvinist it would have been hypocritical for him to do so. “It desired that a letter be sent to the Earl of Manchester acquainting him with that Minister’s insufficiency.” The result is obvious in a return of 1650. “Church ruinated. Cure vacant. Income £25 per annum.”

Evidently there had been some revival of parochial feeling seven years later, when the old established firm of Miles Gray, bell founders, cast the bell now hanging in the tower. The Dutch congregation were at one time granted the use of the church, so possibly they undertook some repairs and helped to provide the bell. This bears four pairs of initials, besides those of Miles Gray, the third of his name. I.F. may stand for John Foke, churchwarden, and W.D. for William Daniell, who left some property in the parish in 1669.

RETURN TO THE OLD PATHS

On the restoration of the Church and King Lord Lucas resumed possession of his despoiled mansion, hence the Lady Anne was carried to her rest in the Lucas Chapel in August, 1680, the Book of Common Prayer being no longer prescribed, as it was when her son was silently buried. On 1st June, 1663, he was present at a magnificent requiem service over the remains of his brother, Sir Charles Lucas, and his friend Sir George Lisle, arbitrarily shot beneath the Castle walls by the Roundheads on 28th August, 1648. The large stone covering their grave and recording the untimely fate of these loyal Cavaliers is still a place of pilgrimage. A board

hangs in the church giving the names of Councillor John Stone and John Fokes, churchwardens at this date.

The will of Edward Burles, rector of St. Giles (possibly the Mr. Borlace presented by Lord Lucas) was proved in 1669; he left 10s. to the poor, and land in Ardleigh with the King's Head Inn to his wife, Marie. His estate was valued at the moderate sum of £35 15s.

In July, 1671, Lord Lucas himself was laid with his ancestors in the family vault.

The family connection with the parish now ceased, the Abbey being sold to John Walkden, Esq., who is said to have accompanied James II, in his flight to France in 1688, being probably a Roman Catholic.

The frugal and industrious Dutch worshippers are still commemorated in the parish by the warm-toned red brick range of dwellings built soon after 1679 by John Wennock, a well-to-do baymaker of Flemish descent. For more than two hundred years they have proved a solace in the declining years to aged widows and spinsters whose fortunes in life have been overclouded.

In 1683 Dr. William, Beveridge, Archdeacon of Colchester, held a Visitation, when it was found that St. Giles's church possessed a silver chalice and cover and a pewter flagon and paten for the service of the Altar. Where are they now?

In 1693 a poll tax returns the adult population, not including the poor, as 663, only St. Peter's being higher with 707. The town was at this time doing a thriving trade in bays and says.

The Mayor of Colchester in 1690 was Churchwarden Benjamin Cock, son of the former rector. He was ejected from the aldermanic bench in 1697 for the offence of being "a common brewer," and so ineligible by the custom of the town, a rather belated discovery. His tombstone in the churchyard records his death in 1723, aged 81, with those of his wife, son and grandson. In many elections of his day supported the newly named Tories.

With the accessions of Good Queen Anne in 1702 we at last reach a connected series of rectors.

On 11th February, 1702, on the presentation of the Queen, Edmund Heywood, 35 years of age, though only two years in priest's orders, was instituted. He was a son of the vicar of Wimbish, educated at Felsted School and Oxford. In August, 1708, he was instituted in Great Bentley, in plurality, where he died in 1728. During his incumbency the parish Registers, which only date from 1692, were regularly kept. In 1730 Mr. Hanson signs as curate, possibly rector. In 1735 the rectory was in possession and patronage of the Rev. Francis Powell, son of the Rev. Joseph Powell, many years rector of St. Mary-at-the-Walls. He was born in 1682, matriculated at Cambridge 1698, was B.A. in 1711, he was appointed rector of all Saints in 1713, which living he held with St. Giles till his death in 1719.

Morant's account of the church a few years earlier says that services were held at fortnightly intervals in the chancel and part of the nave, the rest being in ruins.

Mr. Powell was followed as rector by Rev. Charles Lind, a Scot, educated at Oxford, the resident rector of Wivenhoe. He instituted a weekly service and a quarterly celebration of the Blessed Sacrament, then thought sufficiently frequent. He returns his communicants as 30, an inadequate number surely for 1,200 people, and followed the customary practice of catechizing the children of his parish in summer. He had no parishioners of social position to return, so as a

Oxford D.D. he was happier in the society of the Corsellis family at Wyvenhoe Hall and other local gentry. He doubtless sanctioned, though he did not hear, the first Colchester sermon of the Rev. John Wesley, England's greatest Evangelist, who preached on the Green in November, 1759.

His latest feeble signature was in December 1769, but he survived till 1771. He was also Vicar of West Mersea and Rector of Paglesham, but all his livings had been sequestrated and he left his daughters penniless. The late Mrs. George Round, of East Hill House, was his granddaughter.

Owing to the designation "Curate", being exclusively employed till 1819 it is difficult to name the next incumbent. One John Bowry, son of the Vicar of Messing, who was probably rector, signs from 1772 to 1776; he died in 1778, aged 33. Amongst the others are Joseph Brockwell and Nath. Forster, rectors of West Mersea. Edmund Hickingill and David Mustard, both local men, curates of St. Mary and Wivenhoe, Thomas Twining, later rector of St. Mary and the redoubtable Dr. Samuel Parr, for a brief period Master of the Grammar School.

On the 17th April, 1779, a young priest of 27, Fellow of Gonville and Caius, Cambridge, who in January had been elected Head Master of the Grammar School after a heated contest, was instituted to the rectory of St. James and the curacy of St. Giles. He left the former for Greenstead in 1797, when he also became rector of Pitsey, on the Thames, retaining these till his death at the patriarchal age of 96 in February, 1849. The school he resigned in 1806, and St. Giles, where in 1806 his wife, Mrs. Harriet Hewitt, was buried, in 1817.

During his 70 years' residence in Colchester he naturally attracted a good deal of notice, and some tales of his eccentricity still survive, but he was clearly a man of his age, and doubtless was ready to admit that the standard of the days of Dr. Johnson could not be that of the mid-nineteenth century. He had seen church life almost extinct, then its revival under the Evangelicals and later under Pusey and Newman. In his early days Sunday schools were begun, and his legacy to Greenstead of £166 still carries on the good work. Among his parishioners was Mr. Samuel Bawtree (1766-1826), who built White Hall, and also what was the largest distillery in the kingdom, the Bournebrook. He has a memorial tablet.

THE CHURCH REVIVAL

Mr. Hewitt was followed at St. Giles by the Rev. J.W. Morgan, M.A., of University College Oxford son on the rector of Chelmsford, apparently just arrived at priest's Orders. The population was now over 2,000 souls. He signs now as Rector, and at once took in hand the forlorn church which was made watertight and enlarged, with 200 free sittings for the poor, and a gallery for the choir.

It was reopened 1819, the churchwardens being Edward Austin, nurseryman, who had the gardens in the old walled Abbey, and Samuel Green Cooke (son of Samuel Cooke, who for many years owned the Abbey farm), who married the only daughter of Mr. Wm. Smith, six times Mayor, an office he himself filled in 1838. In 1826 the Rector gave a complete set of altar vessels, when possibly, the 17th century ones disappeared. In 1854 the first organ was purchased. On 13th June 1857, Mr Morgan died and was buried in the new Cemetery. His successor was the Rev. Wollaston Goode, M.A., of Trinity Hall, Cambridge, who worked the parish for fifteen years with self-sacrificing devotion. The patronage had now passed by marriage to Mr. T.M. Gepp, solicitor, Chelmsford. Mr. Goode was a firm adherent of the dominant Evangelical school, and to the end of his life, in 1910, at the age of 86, adhered to the practice of wearing the black Geneva gown in the pulpit. In his incumbency a memorial tablet

was erected in the Church to Mr. W.J. Posford Osborne (1793-1863), founder of the firm who built the huge porter stores in St. Botolph's Street.

For the next thirty years the rectory was held by the Rev. William Henry Wardell, M.A., of University College Durham. He was a genial, broad-minded High Churchman, who brought the church and its services into line with the Oxford revival of corporate worship and dignified English ceremonial. By degrees the interior of the church became more fitted for divine worship, a surpliced choir was formed, and more frequent celebrations and daily services inaugurated. A school was built in the distant hamlet of Old Heath, which became the nucleus of the present district chapel of St. Barnabas, and Assistant Priest was added, and a fund raised to make the parish church more worthy of its sacred character.

In August, 1892, a two days' fete for this purpose was held at Holly Trees, presided over by three of the reigning beauties of the day – the Countess of Warwick, Lady Naylor-Leyland and Miss Ellen Terry, sister-in-law of the Rector. Mr. Wardell died August, 1903. The only memorial tablet left unnoticed so far is to Mr. Wm. Neville, 40 years parish clerk, who died in 1886.

Under the next rector, the Rev. Wm. Bellamy, M.A. of Keble College, Oxford, appointed by the Rev. N.P. Gepp, the fruit of many years' work and prayer by the parishioners was reaped. He had on 19th December, 1907, the pleasure of taking part in the re-dedication of the church by the Rt. Rev. M.F. Johnson, Bishop of Colchester, who also preached, in the presence of the Mayor and Corporation of Colchester and an overflowing congregation. The work had cost some £2,500 and included the building of a stately chancel with well furnished sanctuary and choir stalls, the restoration of the ancient Lucas Chapel and its altar, assisted by gifts from the descendants of that famous family. A new organ was built with the assistance of Dr. Andrew Carnegie, and a new pulpit presented by the churchwardens, Messrs. R.J. Sage and W. Smith.

The want of a parish hall having long been felt and funds gathered, the foundation stone was laid in March, 1903, by the Rt. Hon. James Round M.P., and a commodious building on St. John's Green was ready for the new rector, who was also instrumental in clearing off the debt of £600 on the Parish Room, and in the purchase of the present rectory in Gladstone Road to replace a dilapidated one near the Cemetery.

In 1910, Mr. Bellamy became rector of Newport, Essex and later of a parish in the Forest of Dean.

For the next seven years, 1910-1917, the rectory was held by the Rev. J.B. Marsh, M.A., of St. John's College, Cambridge, who came from the rural parish of Belchamp St. Paul. With the activities of the Great War and the rapidly increasing population the work became too onerous, and Mr. Marsh accepted the living of Nayland in the adjacent Suffolk diocese.

From 1918 to 1927 the rector was the Rev. John Evans M.A., of Jesus College, Oxford, a genial Welshman, appointed by the Arch-deacon of Colchester, to whom the patronage had been transferred by Mr. Gepp. Mr. Evans had long been familiar to Colcestrians as Assistant Priest at Ardleigh and St. Mary-at-the-Walls under Canon G.T. Brunwin-Hales, whom he left in 1905 to become Vicar of Dunmow, moving in 1914 to the important parish of St. John, Southend, then centre of much intensive war danger. After nine years' strenuous work in St. Giles Mr. Evans accepted the rectory of Pentlow on the Stour.

During the incumbency of the Rev. John Evans (in 1921) the stained glass window in the Lucas Chapel was erected by Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Bentley Turner, of Abbeygate House, Colchester, in memory of two of their sons who died before the war.

A handsome tablet on the north side of the Lucas Chapel records the names of those from the parish who sacrificed their lives for King and Country in the Great War (1914-1918). The large stained glass east window was given as a memorial to the fallen.

The Rev. John Evans was followed by the Rev. E.W. Hartley Parker, M.A., of Exeter College, Oxford, also well known to Colcestrians, having been Assistant Master at the Royal Grammar School 1903-1914. He was Headmaster and Chaplain of the London Orphan School, 1914-1920, and became Vicar of Appleby, Lincs., 1920. In 1927 he became Rector of St. Giles and resigned in May, 1931.

The church was redecorated in 1929, the cost being defrayed by donations, and the electric lighting was revised with very effective flood lighting of the chancel and sanctuary, the work being supervised and given by Alderman R.B. Beard. J.P.

The present Rector is the Rev. A.W. Butterworth. M.A., whose activities and enthusiasm have infused new life into this important parish. Mr. R.J. Sage, one of the churchwardens, has seen many changes during his term of office, now extending over 50 years.