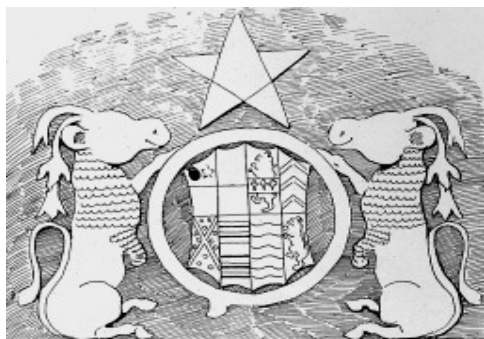


Welcome to St Andrew's Church Earls Colne

A short History and Guide



*15th Earl of Oxford's coat-of-arms on the
west face of the tower*

For information about Church services and activities, please contact the Vicar
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of the monastery in 1536. However, during the 19th century re-ordering they were again displaced and are now in a private chapel at Bures. The remainder of the tomb chests of the Earls of Oxford stayed in the Priory ruins so that, when the antiquary John Weever came to inspect them in 1631, they were “all gone to decay and their inscriptions by time and stealth quite taken away.” However, some of the monuments, including that of the 13th Earl, below, remained long enough for Daniel King to sketch them in 1653.



People

Good Old George!

Thanks to the diligence of George Beeston, one of our churchwardens in the reign of Henry VIII, our church still possesses one of only two pre-Reformation communion sets in Essex. Before hiding the chalice and paten from the Church authorities to save them from confiscation, George removed the stem from the chalice. When the danger had passed the bowl had a less ornate stem fitted, but the silver-gilt paten with its central engraving of Christ the King has survived in its original form, as shown below.



The Church Building

A Saxon document of 1045 mentions a church in Earls Colne but gives no details of its appearance. The earliest surviving parts of the present building date from the 14th century.

The Tower

From whichever direction you approach the church, the tower shows the most visible evidence of its connection with the de Vere family, the Earls of Oxford. The tower was begun in 1460 by the 13th Earl, but building work was interrupted by the Wars of the Roses. The upper section was completed by John, the 15th Earl. He had inherited the title unexpectedly, being only a second cousin of the childless 14th Earl, and celebrated his good fortune by placing his personal coat-of-arms beneath the west and east battlements, the latter including the date 1534. The heraldic star motif appears on other churches of which the de Veres were patrons, including those at Colne Engaine and Lavenham.

The South Aisle

As you come in through the porch, you enter the oldest surviving part of the church. The south aisle and two of the columns in the nave arcade date from 1313 to 1360.

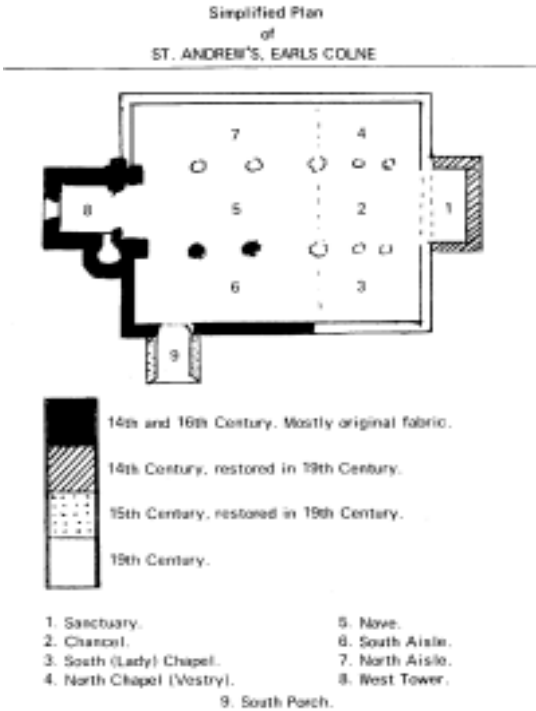
The Nave

The roof over the nave and south aisle was completed in 1534, at the same time as the tower, but the carved angels have ‘migrated’ from the recesses of the Victorian north aisle where they were thought to be less visible. Until the middle of the 19th century, a gallery at the back of the nave provided additional seating for children and musicians.

Victorian Re-ordering

Most of the rest of the church was ‘restored’ by a series of major developments begun in 1864. The north aisle, together with the north and south chapels on either side of the chancel, were added and many of the medieval windows were re-set or

re-located. The stencil-work decorations on the walls of the chancel were completed in 1925, although some sections had to be removed in the 1960s when dry rot treatment became necessary. None of the stained glass is earlier than 1897. The reredos behind the altar is of Caen stone inset with Venetian enamel mosaic and dates from 1876.



Recent Additions

Many of the 20th century fittings, including the pulpit and the vestry panelling, were gifts by the Hunt family, whose agricultural machinery business at the Atlas Works provided a major source of employment for the village until its closure in 1988. The pews were presented as a memorial to Reuben and Elizabeth Hunt. The carved ends, the work of the Coggeshall craftsman Bryan Saunders, depict the couple's many interests. A full list of the emblems can be found at the back of the church. You may also care to

search for the rabbit! While Mr Saunders was putting the finishing touches to his carving, a little girl came to watch and told him about her pet rabbit. At the base of the last pew by the door he added a rabbit and, if you look closely, one of the flowers has the face of a little girl.

The Bells

The original six bells were cast by Henry Pleasant of Sudbury in 1704. They were re-cast in 1869 and the octave was completed in 1908 by the addition of a treble and second, the gift of Mr Harry Hunt. Originally, the bells were rung from ground level. A new ringing floor was inserted in 1987 to provide a small meeting/children's room at the base of the tower.

The Organ

The organ was built by W. Hill and Son in 1893 to replace an earlier instrument of 1864. Despite some major restoration work in 2013, all the original parts and pipes remain. It has two manuals and twenty-seven stops.

The Monuments

The earliest surviving monument, beside the altar in the Lady Chapel, is that of Roger Harlackenden. Roger bought the Earls Colne estates from the 17th Earl of Oxford in 1592 and the title Lord of the Manor passed down through his descendants until 1936.



*Roger Harlackenden's
memorial (1603)*

Three of the de Vere monuments were moved from the Colne Priory church (the family's former mausoleum) to St Andrew's after the dissolution

Ralph Josselin's Diary

The Revd Ralph Josselin, who was Vicar of Earls Colne from 1641 to 1683, kept a diary which has become a valuable source of information to historians all over the world. Josselin recorded not just the day-to-day life of a country parson, but a view of England during the turbulent period of the Civil War and its aftermath. As a staunch Puritan, he was often at odds with the Church authorities and also with some of his parishioners, who became attracted to Quaker meetings in growing numbers. Their local Meeting House in Burrows Road was built in 1674 - one of the earliest in Essex.

Abraham Plaistow

As you leave the church, you may care to look at the memorial to a gamekeeper "of humble origin", placed in an unusually prominent position on the south wall of the tower. Abraham Plaistow was in the service of the Buxton family of Colne Place and was the only person who could control their wayward son, Thomas. After he grew up, the same Thomas entered Parliament and took over from William Wilberforce the leadership of the campaign to abolish slavery. In 1833, after many setbacks, the House of Commons passed his Bill to end slavery in all British dominions. Years later, in his memoirs, Sir Thomas recalled the influence which Abraham Plaistow had on his childhood. He wrote:

"This tutor of mine could neither read nor write, but his memory was stored with more good sense and what is called 'mother wit' than almost any person I have met since. He filled our youthful minds with sentiments as pure and generous as could be found in the writings of Seneca or Cicero. He was our play-fellow and tutor".

No wonder Abraham's epitaph, composed by the Lord of the Manor, Henry Carwardine, should honour a person "to all our village dear."