

HOLY TRINITY CHURCH, TAKELEY, ESSEX



Welcome to the church of The Holy Trinity, an ancient and beautiful building in a sylvan setting and brimming with living history and fine craftsmanship from many periods. Although this is Takeley's oldest standing building by far it is no mere ancient monument but is a living, working building, still in regular use for Christian worship and witness, the purpose for which it was built and for which it has been altered and beautified over nine hundred years by Takeley people from different periods and Christian traditions. Above all it is still loved, wanted and used by those for whom it provides a beautiful and vibrant spiritual home today.

Takeley has much evidence of ancient history from the Bronze Age and Roman periods and we know that this church stands within what was once an ancient circular enclosure which may well have been a pagan holy place. It was then claimed for Christ by Saxon Christians and has remained Takeley's holy place ever since.

The parish which this church now serves is shaped roughly like an equilateral triangle with the old Roman Stane Street (later the A120 and now the B1256) running near to its base. Molehill Green (some 2 ½ miles north) is at its apex and the River Roding forms much of its eastern boundary. The main centre of population is around the old Dunmow to Bishop's Stortford road near the southern boundary, from which a pretty lane leads northwards for about a quarter of a mile to the tree-shaded churchyard. Now called Church Lane, this was originally Chase Lane and the track leading from the north-east corner of the churchyard was the original church lane or "dead man's lane".

How old is the Church?

The answer to this very sensible question asked by visitors to our Church is far from simple as the building has evolved over the centuries and shows work of many periods. From what we can deduce from the structure itself and from what little documentary evidence is available, some of the landmarks in its long history are as follows.

The 1000s. The core of the nave dates from this time. We know that Eudo Dapifer who held the northern manor had a priest in 1086 but no mention is made of a church. In the north wall we see layered masonry, a simple buttressed north-west corner and the sides of an 11th century doorway, the latter two features incorporating re-used Roman bricks and tiles which may have been made in the 200s A. D. or earlier.

The mid 1200s. The church appears to have received a new chancel. Its north-east and south-east windows, although heavily restored, are of this date, as is the piscina.

c. 1320-1340. The south aisle was added. Its eastern section may have incorporated an earlier transept, as is seen in its Decorated style windows and south doorway. The chancel and south aisle may have been given by the Bassingbourne family who gave their name to the now demolished Bassingbourne Hall, and also to the Lady Chapel.

The 1400s. The south porch was added and also the tower that maybe replaced a wooden belfry over the western gable end. The chancel received its south - west and north -west windows (the latter reset in the 19th century vestry), and new east windows were placed in the chancel and south aisle. A document in the National Archives gives details of the retiling undertaken by the Rector, the Bishop of London. This was almost certainly the roof of the chancel.

In the late 1400s the large niche was placed in the north nave wall, probably as an altar to St Thomas by John Gyva, a Takeley-born man who became a wealthy London Ironmonger. Gyva also left money to the high altar and to the altar of “our lady of piteie”. The nearby staircase was made to give access to the rood loft above the medieval screen, also the pulpit was made and the font received its elaborate carved cover.

The 1500s. Around 1500 the Tudor brick window was placed in the north nave wall. This may have been responsible for the problems in the north wall that the churchwardens gave as a reason for selling a chalice in 1548. The 1540s saw a transformation of the interior to cater for the worship of the Reformed Church with its scriptures and services in English and its dislike of pre-Reformation adornments and “visual aids”. By law, chantry chapels were abolished, stone altars were replaced by wooden tables, roods and their lofts were taken down, wall paintings were limewashed over etc. The old order was restored during Mary’s reign (1553-58), but reversed under Elizabeth in 1559, although several parishes were not quick to obey. It seems that Takeley was one of these because there was the gift in 1567 for a light to burn before the great Rood crucifix. One wonders how long this managed to survive.

The wills of Takeley people also tell us that by the end of the 1500s there was a vault under the chancel of the church. There is no record of by whom this was built, and indeed there is now no visible evidence that it was used until the mid 19th century.

The 1600s. Further damage took place at the hands of the Puritans in their zeal to destroy what they thought to be “superstitious images and inscriptions”. This included the destruction of stained glass in our churches, also paintings, carvings and inscriptions of which they disapproved. Churches were furnished for the “plain and Prayer Book” worship of the Church of England “by Law Established”. The nave, aisle and chancel contained commodious box-pews, and many of them would have been owned or rented by the families who occupied them.

The medieval pulpit would have become part of a three-decker arrangement. At the west end was the musicians’ gallery and at the east end stood the simple Communion table, which was used maybe three times a year.

1837-39. This was the brief period when the Reverend James Caporn was vicar here. His memorial plaque leads us to believe that he stood in the tradition of the Evangelical Revival in the Church of England and also that his brief ministry here was much appreciated. In 1838 he instigated repairs which included modifications to the seating in the nave and aisle. The architect for this was William Cheffins of Bishop’s Stortford. This family firm had worked on the churches of Great and Little Hallingbury and at the former St Catherine’s Chapel in Hoddesdon. The ground plan of the completed work shows most of the nave and the chapel end of the aisle still furnished with haphazard box-pews, with northward –facing benches filling much of the aisle.

1847. Under the direction of the Reverend Charles Clarke (vicar 1839-47) the font cover and pulpit were restored and a new reading desk was made, “using antique carved oak panelling found in the church”. Some of the box pews were replaced by open benches. This work was designed and executed by William Ollett Junior, who, with his father, were respected ecclesiastical wood and stone carvers in the City of Norwich where they lived and worked. They travelled further afield however and their craftsmanship may also be seen in nearby churches at Great Dunmow and Little Canfield, also at Erwarnton in Suffolk.

1861. The interior underwent repairs which included the introduction of more benches to replace the box pews, the cleaning and restoration of the arcade and walls, the renovation of the memorial glass in the east window and the insertion of the O’Connor glass in the chancel south window. In addition, plain glass in a north window was inserted by Tadman of Dunmow. The porch was repaired and a new south door made and fitted. We have yet to discover the architect for this work.

1874. On 25th April, the chancel was reopened following a very thorough restoration to the design of Ewan Christian, an architect of national repute who designed and restored many churches nationwide, also the National Portrait Gallery. The contractor was Parmeter of Braintree. It was thought that the removal of a beam “in bygone days”, possibly the rood beam which often also served as a tiebeam, had

weakened the north wall of the nave. Was this possibly the weakening that led the churchwardens in 1547 to sell a chalice to mend a wall? The junction of the nave and chancel roofs was strengthened by the erection of a new chancel arch and the wall above it. Further support and stability was gained by the addition of the vestry/organ chamber to the north of the chancel.

1902. On 9th October, Bishop H.F. Johnson of Colchester dedicated Takeley's new Norman & Beard organ at a service where Mr. A. Englefield Hull, Mus. Bac. F.R.C.O. , directed the music and was assisted by a "clever young lady violinist".

1910. Miss Florence Ross, of Nevern Road, Earl's Court and formerly of Hatfield Grange Farm at nearby Hatfield Broad Oak, presented the magnificent rood screen in memory of her parents and sister. This superb piece of early 20th century craftsmanship was designed by George Halford Fellowes Prynne, a prominent and versatile architect of his period, whose work is rare in the Eastern Counties. He created mighty and magnificent churches countrywide, including Holy Trinity Roehampton, St. Alban's Bournemouth, All Saints Dulwich, and All Saints Elland, near Halifax. The son of Father George Rundle Prynne, the legendary anglo-catholic vicar of St. Peter's Plymouth, much of his work reflects this tradition. Takeley may well be his only commission in Essex, although he designed another beautiful screen at Rattlesden in Suffolk. At the dedication service on July 31st the choir was conducted by Mr. J. Cooper Smith, whose daughter played the organ, and the Bishop of St. Albans preached. The new screen cost in the region of £500.

1914. The further generosity of Miss Ross provided some £1,500 for the transformation of the chancel interior, again to the design of Fellowes Prynne. New pavements were laid and new stalls were made for the clergy and choir, the sanctuary walls were lined with panelling and a handsome new altar became the church's focal point, with a small stone mensa- slab set into it. This was the year when the Diocese of Chelmsford was formed and the Bishop of Chelmsford dedicated the new work on 26th July. At this service the choir was robed in cassocks and surplices for the first time.

1928. The timber-clad "Herts spike" was struck by lightning and was replaced by a taller pyramid tower roof with a shorter spirelet finial. Evidence exists that other strikes have occurred in the 1880s.

1954-67. A major restoration took place in stages under the direction of the Stratford architect Douglas Thomerson. In 1964 the chancel was redecorated, plaster was removed from the south aisle ceiling and the church was entirely re-roofed. 1966 saw the reglazing of all the plain glass windows, internal repairs, re-plastering and redecoration of the nave and aisle. The south aisle received a new floor and the pulpit was equipped with new oak stairs. On 1967 the Lady Chapel was refurbished and repaved with stone and equipped with a new altar of York stone.

2003-05. The west end was re-ordered to provide an entrance vestibule, vestries, kitchen, ringer's gallery, etc., to the design of John Glanfield and Partners. The work was carried out by Gordon Sylvester and Sons, a local firm.



Photograph by John Watkiss

***The magnificent font cover restored about the year 1878 by
Messrs. Webb and Gibbons of Dunmow***

Exploring the Exterior

Few visitors to Holy Trinity will ever forget its idyllic and beautiful setting, peacefully at the end of a lane that now forms part of the Harcamlow Way and towards the northern end of an enormous churchyard, which must be one of the most picturesque in Essex. Although so near to the sprawling Stansted Airport and also the busy A120, which now affords fine views of the church from the north, here we have a rural oasis of peace and beauty.

Out of the many and varied greens of the churchyard rise the ancient hand-built walls of the church, with their medley of mellow colours in the various building materials used. One wonders just how many flints and other stones were lovingly gathered from the fields to construct the grey and brown flint-rubble walls. The flints are knapped to expose their shiny cores on the south face of the porch and in the south aisle they are covered with cream-coloured render. The gabled roofs of the nave, aisle and chancel have red tiles and there are Roman bricks and tiles and mellow Tudor brickwork visible on the north side of the nave. Some of the original stonework, especially in the doorways, is soft chalky clunch from the Chiltern area, which erodes badly and here has needed replacement by new stone or cementing over for protection.

The western tower rose during the 1400s, when the perpendicular style of architecture was used in the design of windows and doorways. Elegant diagonal buttresses not only strengthen its four corners but also enhance its profile, and on the south face is the staircase-vice which gives access to the first floor chamber. The west doorway has a fine but rather weathered arch of clunch, with hanging shields in quatrefoils in the spandrels between the arch and the square hoodmould, or dripstone, to deflect rainwater. The great processional doors are plain but may well be 500 years old at least. The three-light west window has renewed mullions and tracery but its dripstone rests upon large original corbel heads. Above this is a small niche, with a pedestal for its former statue, and a small cross above, whilst the north and south walls are pierced by single openings to light the intermediate chamber.

It looks as if much of the stonework of the double belfry windows, framed by hood-moulds and corbel heads, has been carefully and tastefully renewed. Beneath the embattled parapet on the north and south side are fine gargoyle faces, which effectively throw rainwater from the tower roof clear of the walls. The tower is crowned with a steep pyramid roof, terminating in a tiny spirelet, renewed after its larger and taller predecessor was struck by lightning in 1928. Both spirelets are variations on the “Herts spike” which crowns many Hertfordshire towers and others in the counties that border it.

The north side of the nave shows some of the earliest remaining craftsmanship in the church. The north-west corner is un-buttressed but incorporates re-used Roman tiles. More may be seen in the remaining lower part of the blocked north doorway, which was almost certainly Norman, with a semi-circular arch which was lost c.1500 when the two-light window of mellow Tudor bricks was inserted.

The triple square-headed window further east has entirely 19th century stonework. Near the nave's east end is a tiny slit window lighting the rood-loft staircase and beneath it are the remains of a blocked former window, which may have been a "low-side" window, through which a bell was rung at the climax of the daily Mass, so that people unable to attend could pause and join in prayer. A careful look at the masonry of the north nave wall shows a large area where the flints are set in layers, which is further evidence that this wall may well date from the 1000s, although parts may have been restored or refaced.

The chancel underwent thorough restoration in 1874 when, to the designs of Ewan Christian, the organ chamber and former vestry were added to the north. The three-light east window is entirely 19th century and traces of the larger 15th century window which it replaced may be seen in the wall. The much-renewed double eastern windows in the north and south walls may originally date from the mid 1200s, whilst the square headed south-west window, also its northern counterpart, re-set in the vestry were originally fashioned in the early 1400s. The lower jambs, or sides, of the southern priest's doorway are original, but its upper part was renewed in 1874. In 1435 the Bishop of London's records give the materials used for the repair of the church. This was a roof repair and was almost certainly to the roof of the chancel.

The south aisle has rendered walls and a three-light perpendicular window of the mid 1400s, whilst the other windows show beautiful architecture in the Decorated style of c.1320-40. The easternmost is blocked and was a fine three-light window with a reticulated, or net-like, tracery similar in design to the two-light window to the west of it, and the west window. The window to the east of the porch may be a little earlier. It is thought by some authorities that the aisle's eastern section was originally a south transept, which was absorbed into the later aisle when it was built. Any really convincing evidence for this lies hidden behind the render which covers the walls.

The large south porch was added in the 1400s. Its side walls have two-light square-headed windows and the flints which face its south wall are split to expose their shiny cores. The wide entrance arch has been greatly renewed and was probably originally of clunch, as was the inner entrance arch, parts of which have been renewed. In the wall above are two small openings flanking a worn niche for a statue. The original dedication of the church was to St Mary so this niche may have held her statue. Inside, the stone wall-seats remain, reminding us that the church porch was not only for shelter but where honest business was transacted, weddings were solemnised, also "Churching" services after childbirth and the first part of the Baptism service took place. The roof is supported by 19th century tie-beams and king-posts. We enter by means of a door which was made in 1874, but re-using the strap-work hinges of its 15th century predecessor.

What to See Inside the Church

Visitors to Holy Trinity very soon become aware that this is a loved and lived-in building where tasteful work of our own times rightly takes its place alongside that of past ages. The west end was transformed in 2003-4 by the creation of an entrance vestibule, vestries, kitchen, ringer's gallery, etc., to the design of John Glanfield & Partners. The work was carried out by local firm Gordon Sylvester and Sons.

The south aisle is divided from the nave by a 14th century arcade of four bays, resting upon octagonal piers, with moulded capitals and bases. On the central pier, facing west, a carved medieval head forms a bracket and pedestal for an image and into the capital above is carved a tiny trefoil canopy above the image. The eastern arch and its capitals have a slightly different design from the rest, and some believe it to have been built maybe a century earlier as an arch into a former transept. The chancel arch was designed by Ewan Christian in 1874.

The roofs of the nave and aisle are lined with comparatively recent boarding, the nave roof is supported by crown-posts rising from ancient, possible 15th century, tie-beams, of which the two western ones are cambered. Above the boarding is a simple single-framed roof which may incorporate 14th century timbers. Hanging from the tie-beams are four brass and bronze and two wrought-iron coronas. The chancel has a simple single-framed and braced roof, which was probably part of Ewan Christian's 1874 restoration and may well have reproduced the original medieval roof.

The graceful tower arch was fashioned with the tower in the 1400s and its lower six or so feet are covered with graffiti from 1624 onwards, mostly initials and dates, randomly carved by 17th, 18th, 19th and 20th century Takelyites wishing to immortalise themselves, like "Rob Speller, Organ Player, 1858". More may be seen in the jambs, or sides, of the west doorway including two little figures and a pattern of changes for bell-ringers. The doorway to the tower staircase has preserved its original door, with good 15th century ironwork in its hinges and handle. A newel staircase leads to the silence chamber and on a step near the top is scratched the date 1614. An eastern opening in the silence chamber now looks into the roof-void but once gave a view of the altar and so may have been a Sanctus bell window, through which a ringer could see when to sound a bell at the climax of the daily Mass so that those unable to be present could pause and join in prayer.

In the bell-chamber above hang four bells, the details of which are as follows

	Diameter (inches)	Weight (cwt)	Note	Date	Founder
Treble	31 $\frac{3}{4}$	c.6	C	1579	Unknown
2 nd	35 $\frac{3}{4}$	c. 8	B	c.1508-22	William Culverdon of London
3 rd	37 $\frac{5}{8}$	c. 9	A	1896 (recast)	John Warner & Sons of London (1607)- original bell, Robert Oldfield)
Tenor	41	c.10 $\frac{1}{2}$	G	1607	Robert Oldfield of Hertford.

This bell has inscribed round it “Principio Sancto Mario Meo” Either this has been misrepresented or the Latin of the bell founders was poor as it should read Sancta Maria, the then patron Saint of Takeley.

This bell has the initials B.G. Vicar, this is Benjamin Gooneld, and M.C. W.M., churchwardens.

At the west end of the nave, and symbolising our entry through Baptism into the family of the Church, is the octagonal font, where Takeley babes have been baptised for at least 600 years, and still are! Although carefully restored by the Victorians, the top of its bowl has on the western side traces of where a locking device once fitted to secure the cover so that the baptismal water could not be stolen for “magical purposes”. The bowl panels have tracery designs within circles, including quatrefoils, trefoils, a wheel of three mouchette shapes and a cross. Crowning it is Takeley’s magnificent font cover, which is eight feet tall and 2 $\frac{1}{4}$ feet wide, a rare and beautiful treasure of c.1500 and one of only six medieval examples in Essex, although it has been greatly restored. This intricately carved spire rises in tiers, with eight vaulted and canopied recesses at the base and an array of crocketed pinnacles, buttresses, flying buttresses and tabernacle-work, crowned by a dove of the Holy Spirit in flight. It appears to have had a chequered career in the past two centuries, having been restored by William Ollett Junior in 1848, then stored in the west end of the south aisle. Its top was repaired in 1878 by Messrs Webb & Gibbons of Dunmow. The Reverend Robert Hart had found it in the old vestry in a sad condition, the upper part having been knocked off, it is said, “to spare the ceiling”. It underwent further restoration, maybe by Fellows Prynne, at the behest of Miss Florence Ross.

A low cupboard beneath the north-west nave window incorporates 15th century traceried woodwork, almost certainly from what remained of the medieval front benches. Nearby is a list of vicars of Takeley from the year 1362. More recent research has traced Takeley’s priests back to Ralph, who was “presbyter de Takeley” c.1141-1151. The Domesday Survey records Eudo Dapifer who held the northern manor of Takeley as having a priest in 1086, who is not named. There is no mention of a church but this was not unusual in the Survey.

The nave is mostly seated with 19th century benches with traceried straight-topped ends, modelled upon what remained of the 15th century benches. The western bench on the north side is almost entirely original and there is original tracery in its northern end; more medieval timbers have been re-used in the front bench on the south side.

The south aisle has been cleared of seating, creating a versatile space for a variety of activities. At its west end is a tall cupboard rising 6¼ feet and made up on all four sides of linenfold panelling, and with hinges, of the 1500s. Some authorities believe that this was once part of a surround to the font like those at Littlebury and Thaxted, but it may well have had a secular origin in one of the more prosperous houses. The great house built by William Towse c.1580 called Bassingbourne Hall was demolished in 1813 and could be the source of the panelling. The east end, traditionally known as the Bassingbourne Chapel, has become the Lady Chapel. The original of Towse's great house was owned by the Bassingbourne family from c.1200 for a century and a half.

In 1967 the Lady Chapel was equipped with a stone altar, its York stone mensa or top-slab, resting upon two piers of rough hewn stone. To the south of its east window is a 14th century cinquefoil-headed niche for a statue, probably of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

A large and graceful 15th century niche may be seen in the nave wall to the west of the pulpit. There is a fine stone carving in the head of its ogee-shaped arch, which has leaf-brackets flanked by pinnacles. This once framed either a statue or a painting which must have been quite an important shrine. It is almost certainly the site of the altar of St. Thomas mentioned in the 1511 will of John Gyva, a member of the London Ironmongers' Guild, who was born in Takeley. The main base of the Ironmongers' activity was in Ironmongers Lane close to where St. Thomas à Becket was born, so it is probably this saint who had his altar here and not St. Thomas the Apostle.

The 15th century pulpit is another medieval treasure, one of only seven in Essex. It was probably once taller, with an elegant "wineglass" stem, of which only the radiating pulpit base remains. Again the traceried panels have arches with the "ogee" curve, decorated with leaf-croquets.

Beside the pulpit is the lower entrance to the rood loft staircase that ascended in the thickness of the wall to the rood loft which jutted out into the nave above the long- lost medieval rood screen. It was possible to walk along the loft in order to tend the many candles which burned in honour of the great rood of Christ crucified, flanked by his mother and St. John, which formed a great focal-point beneath the chancel arch, proclaiming the central fact of the faith - Christ crucified. The dormer window in the roof to the south was probably originally made to give more light to this rood complex, although its present timber framework looks to be later.

Thanks to the generosity of Miss Florence Ross (who had lived at Hatfield Grange), the intricate design of George Fellowes Prynne and the craftsmanship of Messrs Day & Francis of Crediton, Takeley once again has a beautiful rood screen. This memorial to Miss Ross's parents and sister was dedicated on 31st July 1910. It is an amazing piece of woodcarving which it is worth pausing to enjoy, and has the feel of a West Country screen rather than an East Anglian one. Its dado or base section, has openwork designs in circles and linen-fold panelling. The upper section, which gives a clear view into the chancel, has a mass of intricately carved tracery, rising to the vaulted underside of the carved cornice at the summit, in which we see little angels, carrying the instruments of Our Lord's passion. This supports the rood group, with Our Lady and St. John gazing up at the crucified Christ, and with the chalice and unleavened wafer through which the Church proclaims Christ's death at the foot of the cross.

On the eastern respond of the arcade nearby hangs an 18th century icon, entitled "The Mother of God of Akhtyrskaya" and showing the Blessed Virgin Mary looking at her crucified Son. It was painted in Russia in about 1750 and was purchased in 1970 to replace a 16th century icon which was given to the church by a soldier in 1941 but was stolen.

The chancel, with its single-framed and braced roof of 1874, was transformed in 1914 when Florence Ross financed its internal re-ordering to the designs of George Fellowes Prynne. It was re-floored in grey and white marble and refurnished in a style which blends perfectly with the screen. The handsome choir stalls, with their open-work fronts, the linen-fold panelling studded with little tracery designs picked out in colour, lining the lower part of the sanctuary walls and the high altar, with its canopied figures of the archangels Michael and Gabriel, are fine examples of the early 20th century woodcarvers' art.

The altar is cleverly designed so that its coloured frontals are placed behind the woodcarving so as not to obscure it. Set into the top of this wooden Communion table (and hidden from view) is a small mensa-slab of marble, enabling Takeley's Anglo-Catholic clergy to celebrate the Eucharist upon what was a stone altar - an object then illegal in the Church of England. The east window was given a marble sill and the wall beneath was lined with marble. In the north wall is an aumbry where some bread and wine from the Eucharist may be reserved so that it can be taken to the sick and to others who need it.

In the wall to the South of the altar is a piscina recess, with a beautiful trefoil-headed arch resting upon circular shafts, dating it from the late 1200s - the date of the nearby window and also of the brief period when piscinas had two drains to prevent the disposal of consecrated material from the cleansing of the chalice in the same outlet as water from the washing of the priest's hands and other disposable material. In the early 1300s, however, it was ordered that all consecrated material should be "reverently consumed" as we have done ever since and not poured into the piscina. The present pair of basins are 19th century; the originals would have had drains. The fact that the piscina is set low may indicate that the chancel floor was originally at a lower level.

The present east window dates from 1859 but the hood-mould of its predecessor survives, indicating that it was a 15th century perpendicular window.

In its chamber on the north side of the chancel is the organ by Norman & Beard, installed in 1902. It has two manuals, pedals and ten speaking stops. This chamber was designed by Ewan Christian in 1874 as a vestry and hidden behind the organ is the fireplace with which it was equipped for the comfort of the vicar. It is probable that this is where the entrance to the vault was situated and that it was during the building of the vestry that the vault was filled in.

The medieval stained glass, which taught faith to the people and enabled artists to make the house of God beautiful, has been destroyed, probably by the Puritans in the 1640s. Four windows are now adorned with 19th century stained glass, two of which were given in memory of much loved people who were part of this church and parish.

1. East window. Gratiana, wife of the Reverend George Tufnell (vicar 1855-68) had wished to see the east window restored and beautified and this was done in her memory in 1859. The six scenes from Our Lord's life depicted in the main lights are: the taking down of Jesus from the cross and the baby Jesus in the manger (north light); Jesus and the ministering angel in the garden of Gethsemane and the scourging of Jesus (south light); the Crucifixion, with Mary and John at the foot of the cross and the apostles and Mary looking up to the risen Christ as he ascends into heaven (central light). Angels with scrolls look out from the three tracery light.
2. Chancel, north. Jesus with the woman by the well at Samaria and Thomas with the risen Jesus.
3. Chancel, south. The healing of Jairus' daughter and Jesus blessing the children. In memory of Mary Anne and Alexander, children of Charles (vicar 1839-47) and Rosa Mary Clarke. This window is signed "O'Connor, 1861" and the prolific London firm of Michael & Arthur O'Connor may well have made all three chancel windows.
4. Tower, west window. St James (with staff and scallop shell). St. Peter (with keys) and St. John the Evangelist (with poisoned chalice) in the main lights and the emblems of the four Evangelists in the tracery. We have yet to discover the maker and the donor of this window.

Memorial Inscriptions

The church contains several memorials to past Takeley worthies. Some of the furnishings and the glass were given as memorials and have appropriate inscriptions. Other people are commemorated by inscriptions in the floors and on the walls.

The following 17th century black marble ledger slabs may be seen in the floors.

1. WILLIAM COLLYN (died 1684), with coat of arms. {Sanctuary, North}.
2. MARY ENGLISH (died 1695) and her husband, the Reverend JOHN ENGLISH (vicar from 1663 until his death in 1716), with coat of arms. He was also vicar of Great Birch, Essex. (Sanctuary, South).
3. JOHN KENDALL (died 1676), with coat of arms. He purchased Bassingbourne Hall in 1663. The inscription begins “Within this chapel, belonging to ye manor of Bassingborne Hall” so this slab must have originally been in the Lady Chapel floor and presumably his grave is still there. (Chancel, north, near the Communion rail).
4. WILLIAM TOWSE (died 1632). (Chancel, south, near the Communion rail. Also originally in the Lady Chapel).
5. A large slab, with a fine coat of arms, invites us to “Stay, whosoer’re thou art, view here this Marble, which does intombe ye body” of HANNAH KNOLLYS of William Collins of Lincolnshire (i). (Nave, centre, but originally in the chancel).
6. DAVID DUNBAR, gent. (died 1640) This memorial was here in the chancel in 1720, but is no longer visible. It may now be under the choir stalls. We know nothing at all about this man.

On the walls, the following plaques may be seen :-

1. Small oval brass plaque recording a gift by ISABELLA COLES CHILDS in 1850 of £130 to annexe 6 acres, 2 rods and 16 perches of glebe land to augment the vicarage. (Sanctuary, North, upper).
2. Rectangular brass plaque recording the gift in 1689 by MRS. HANNAH KNOLLYS of £7 per annum to augment the vicarage, also a house and orchard for the use of the Parish Clerk. (Sanctuary, north, lower).
3. Marble plaque, erected by his parishioners, to “our lamented and dearly beloved pastor” the Reverend JAMES CAPORN vicar 1837 until his death, aged 51, in 1839. The tribute to this faithful “minister of the Gospel of Christ” is worth reading.

Other notable people who were certainly buried in the vault below the chancel include Robert Fowler (Archbishop of Dublin 1779 -1801, died at Bassingbourne Hall), Francis Bernard and Margareta Parker, daughter of Sir Peter Parker who was the patron of Lord Nelson. They all lived at Bassingbourne Hall. Altogether some twenty people were buried in the vault from at least 1580 to 1839 when James Caporn was buried there.

Some notable 19th, 20th and 21st century clergy of Takeley.

CAPORN, JAMES. 1837-39. In a period when much of the Church of England was little more than the godly branch of the civil service and you attended church because it was your patriotic duty to God and the King (but in which order is debatable), James Caporn's brief ministry seems to have really stimulated the good folk of Takeley to sincere personal Christianity. His memorial in the chancel uses the language of the Evangelical Revival which was waking the English Church from its spiritual sleep with earnest Gospel preaching of salvation and personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Clearly Takeley folk loved this "virtuous, warm hearted and upright" pastor and his "reverence" for the zealous and faithful discharge of his duties as a Minister of the Gospel of Christ and mourned his passing at the age of 51. This godly Evangelical lost no time in modifying the seating in the church so that more people could gather round the pulpit to hear the Gospel preached.

CLARKE, CHARLES. 1839-47. He was the son of Sir Charles Mansfield Clarke, who was Queen Adelaide's physician. He left Takeley for Hanwell, Middlesex, where he was rector until 1864. Having inherited his father's baronetcy in 1857, he gave up parish work to be Lord of the Manor of Worlingham, near Beccles, where he died in 1899. It is interesting that the 1861 memorial window to his children was given long after he had left Takeley.

CHILD, VICCESSIMUS KNOX. 1847-55. Son of William Child, a Lambeth merchant. Whilst here he was also Lecturer at St. Magnus the Martyr in the City of London. He became rector of Little Easton, where he remained until 1868.

TUFNELL, GEORGE CRESSNER. 1855-68. He was curate at Denton, Norfolk before coming to Takeley. He followed his predecessor as rector of Little Easton from 1868-91.

HART, ROBERT. 1868-97. His long ministry at Takeley followed curacies at Furneux Pelham, Gestingthorpe, Gillingham and Great Maplestead. He left for the small parish of Greenstead Green, near Halstead, where he died in 1904. He was Diocesan Inspector of Schools, 1871-92, and Rural Dean of Newport, 1886-96. From his diaries, parts of which have been published, we can glean some idea of his ministry here. He noted a strong puritanical spirit in Takeley on his arrival, and a "vigorous Chapel community". For his first 10 years here he "wisely conformed" to the Low Church tradition, wearing the customary black preaching-gown in the pulpit, but by the end of his ministry a fully choral Matins and Evensong had been established, and although the Holy Communion was only celebrated monthly, nearly all the congregation stayed to receive the sacrament. In 1882 he notes time spent with the Misses Ross of Hatfield Grange, including on June 2nd, "Florence Ross came in for a little chat after tea". Clearly this lady, who was to so gloriously transform the interior of the church, was already a keen member of it, and Takeley's churchmanship had, through careful moderate teaching, been raised a little.

KEMPTHORNE, CHARLES HENRY. 1897-1912. Takeley was his first parish, after curacies at Middlewich, Cheshire, and Mistley. He left to be vicar of High Beech from 1912-20.

OAKLEY, EDWIN HENRY. 1912-37. After curacies at Thorpe Hamlet, Norwich, and St. Paul's Paddington, he became rector of Lamarsh (1898-99) and vicar of Halstead (1899-1912) before his 25 years in Takeley.

MEARS, JAMES GARLAND De QUINCEY. 1937-38. Ordained in New Zealand, he was priest-in-charge of Liston, (1935-6) and then had Permission to Officiate in the Diocese from (1936-39), during which time he officiated for a year at Takeley, before moving to Scotton and Osberton, and then to Leverton, and later to Normanton on Trent, Notts.

HUTCHINSON, CHARLES, ERNEST. 1938 – 45. Curate at Hengoed, Wales, and St. Andrew Wolverhampton before coming to Takeley. He left for Cranwell, Lincs.

HEATH, RAYMOND, AUDLEY, DUNBAR. 1945-61. He served curacies at the Anglo-Catholic parishes of St. Mark's Mansfield, Amblecote and St. Paul's, Worcester, before becoming rector at Stondon Massey from 1937-45.

BRANCH, WILLIAM, HUBERT. 1962-74. He came to Takeley from a curacy at St. John's Moulsham, Chelmsford, and from 1970 was also in charge of Little Canfield (as have all subsequent vicars, taking the title of rector).

GALLON, EDWARD, GEORGE. 1974-83. He served his title at the Anglo-Catholic stronghold of All Saints, Southend on Sea. He retired from Takeley to Hurst Green, Surrey.

WALKER, BARRY, DONOVAN. 1983-88. Curate at St. Michael's Enfield, and at Hornsey, then vicar of St. Martin, Kensal Rise, (1961-71), and of St. John, Palmers Green.

BRITT, ERIC, STANLEY. 1988-94. Curate at the evangelical Christ Church, Chorley Wood, then at Frimley, then priest in charge of Alresford, Essex, from 1980-88, He left Takeley to become a hospital chaplain.

MILLAR, FRANK. 1994-2000. He had been parish priest at Tendring, Beaumont, and Great Oakley (1976-83), then rector of Rivenhall, (1983-87), and chaplain at Palma and Menorca (1987-90), before coming to Takeley in 1994.

BOND, LAURENCE. 2000-09. He was curate, then Team Vicar in the Saffron Walden Ministry. He is now priest in charge of Sible and Castle Hedingham, Essex.

WYNNE, TERESA, Curate at Takeley 2007-2010 , then priest in charge of St. Leonard's, Lexden, Colchester, Essex.

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Roy Tricker 2010.



Photograph by Steve Hazon

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Please leave a generous donation towards the upkeep of this beautiful church.

If you require assistance in tracing your Takeley ancestry, in the first instance please refer to our website www.tlhs.org.uk through which there are links to all Takeley baptism, marriage and burial records as well as all memorial stone inscriptions from the graveyard. If you still require assistance after this please email the Takeley Local History Society secretary, secretary@tlhs.org.uk .

A range of local history booklets are available, details are on our website.