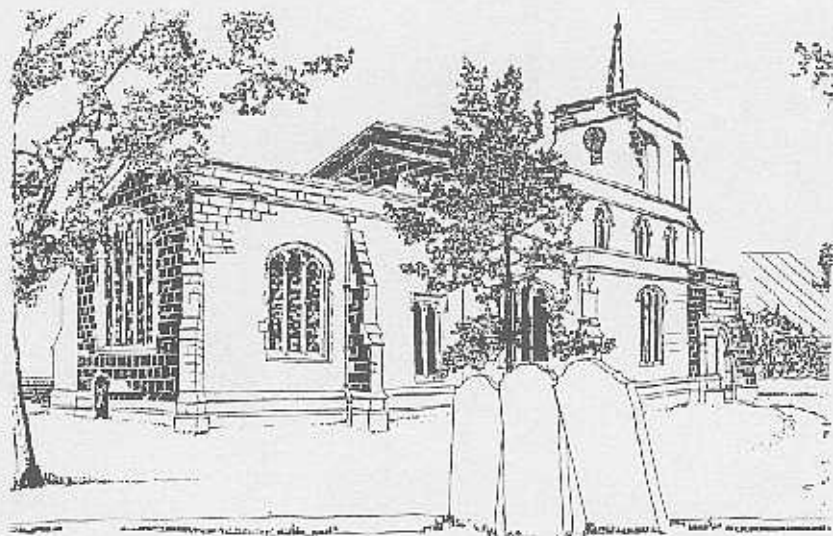


St. Mary The Virgin Eaton Bray

GUIDE BOOK

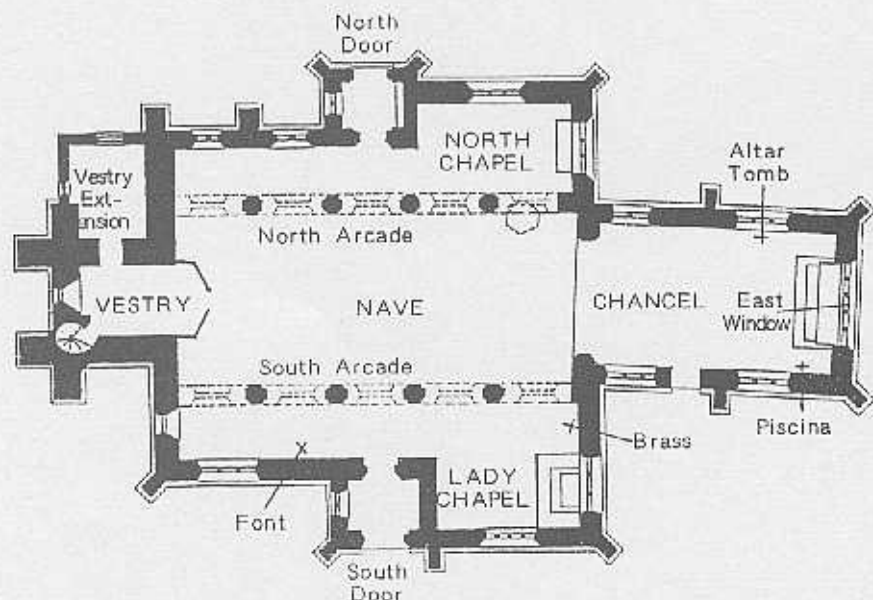


WELCOME

to this ancient Parish Church of St. Mary The Virgin, which has served as the focus of worship and prayer in this village of Eaton Bray for many centuries and has, since 1975, been the Parish Church of Eaton Bray with Edlesborough.

Please rest awhile and enjoy the peace and prayer which soaks its stones, so wonderfully fashioned in the 13th Century to the glory of God.

"Whosoever thou art that interest this Church, leave it not without one prayer to God for thyself, for those who minister, and for those who worship here."



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Editor : Margaret Jones

Illustrations : Alf Hall, Philip Johnson and Russ Harrison Photographs : Eileen Bennett

With grateful thanks to all those who have helped in so many ways, in particular Chris Pickford, County Archivist, County Record Office, Bedford and Pat Bailey of Copyright.

Thanks also to all the sponsors who have made the production of this revised edition possible, including those who have sponsored in memory of a loved one of this parish, and the many people who have generously donated large or small sums without individual acknowledgement of their contribution.

First edition printed Summer 1984 – Revised and reprinted Spring 1993

Typeset and printed by Copyright, 16 Ashton Square, Dunstable
Telephone Dunstable (0582) 660507

THE CHURCH OF ST. MARY THE VIRGIN

EATON BRAY

EATON BRAY or EITONE, meaning an island settlement, is mentioned in the Domesday Book 1086.

The name refers to the abundant water supply from the springs which issue at the foot of the Downs. Even today the parish boundary is largely defined by streams.

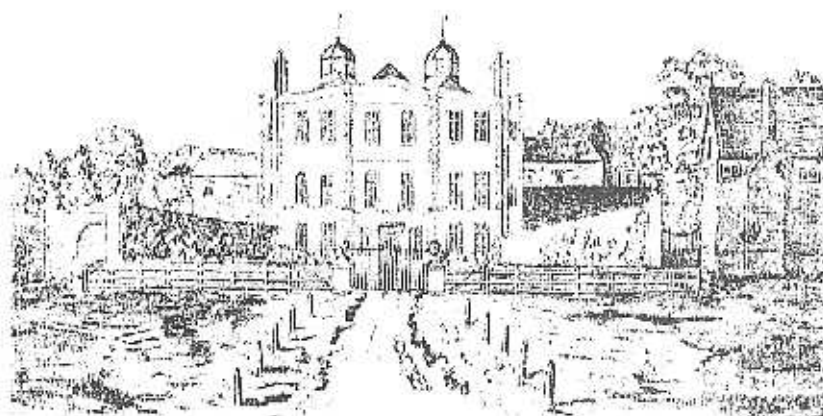
The original church building was probably built of wattle and daub with a thatched roof, as building stone was very scarce in this district until the discovery of the Totternhoe stone beds in the 11th Century.

The present Church building dates back to 1205 - 1221. There is little doubt that the church was designed by John de Celia, the 'building Abbot' who was born at Studham. It has been fittingly described as 'cathedral architecture' in miniature, and is among the finest parish churches in England.

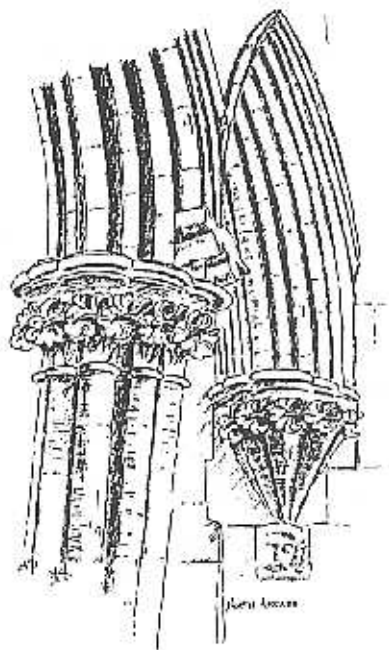
THE MANOR OF EITONE – 1066 AND ALL THAT

After the Norman Conquest 1066, the 'Manor' of Eitone was given to Odo, Bishop of Bayeux, who was half brother to William the Conqueror. After Odo's disgrace, the manor was, for most of the time, kept in the King's hands until it passed from Henry II to his widow Queen Eleanor. Following her death in 1204 it was granted by King Stephen to William de Cantelupe in 1205 in exchange for 300 marks and his manor of Cokeswall.

Cantelupe was a great baron and very important politically. In 1221 he began to build a large castle at Eitone, to the great alarm of the Priory at Dunstable. The present Park Farm, about half a mile north of the church, is close to the site where parts of the moat and traces of earthworks still exist. The completed castle had double moats, two roofed bridges and a gate house. The great hall was roofed with timber and amongst the many other buildings was a small chapel dedicated to St. Nicholas, a granary and stables for 60 horses.



Eaton Bray manor pictured before demolition circa 1794



RE-BUILDING THE CHURCH

The original Eitone Church was granted to Merton Priory (Dunstable) by King Stephen some time between 1126 and the date of his accession in 1135. The Priory continued to hold both rectory and the living of the church until the Dissolution.

Before beginning the castle, Cantelupe began re-building the church, and it is to him we owe the north arcade with its fluted pillars and beautifully carved capitals. It appears that he planned a much larger church, but unfortunately he quarrelled with the Prior of Merton, having claimed the church as a right pertaining to the manor. By an agreement between the two parties in 1210 William released his right to the Church, on condition that the Prior of Merton should allow him a chapel in his Castle in which the chaplain, provided by the Prior, should read divine service three days a week.

The South Aisle was built between 1211 and 1221 but it is much plainer in style.

In 1291 the rectory of Eitone was valued at £16. 13s. 4d. and the vicar's stipend was £5. 6s. 8d.

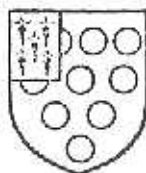
THE 'BRAY' CONNECTION

The family of Bray were of consequence in this county at an early period – records show that Thomas de Bray was a Knight of the Shire in 1289. The "Manor" of Eaton remained in the hands of descendants of the Cantelupa family until the 7th lord, John de la Zouche. He fought for Richard III at Bosworth Field, but his lands were confiscated by Parliament in 1485.

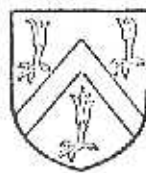
At that time a certain Reginald Bray was one of the followers of Sir William Stanley. It was Reginald Bray who picked up the fallen crown of the dead king and put it on the head of Henry, afterwards crowned as Henry VII.

In 1490 Henry VII granted Eaton Manor to Sir Reginald Bray, now a famous man in matters civil and military. His head can be seen carved in stone high up on the exterior of St. George's Chapel, Windsor, which owes much to his skill as an architect. Naturally he turned his attention to the church of his newly acquired manor and built here at Eaton (henceforce known as Eaton Bray) a large oblong tower – longer on the north and south sides – upon the small 13th Century tower then in existence.

Sir Edmund Bray, Sir Reginald's nephew, was summoned to Parliament in 1530 as Baron of Eaton Bray. The family of Bray died out in the principal branch with the death of John Lord Bray, without issue, in 1557.



ZOUCHE
Coat of Arms



BRAY
Coat of Arms

THE REFORMATION

During the 1530s, after much unrest, the two English provinces of the old Universal Catholic Church became the independent national Church of England, allowing the Monarch to appoint two Archbishops and 24 Bishops.

In 1547 St. Mary's church was granted by Henry VIII to the Fellows of Trinity College in Cambridge, and it remained under their jurisdiction until 1938 when the gift of the living was transferred to the St. Albans Diocesan Board of Patronage. Trinity College continued for many years to send money for beanstraw for covering the church floor in winter, (at least until 1822 when the custom was mentioned in the church register), and was still responsible for maintaining the Chancel until 1943.

By 1559, the first year of the reign of Elizabeth I, the Acts of Supremacy and Uniformity were passed and clergy who refused to conform were deposed. It must have been a very difficult time as John Kirby, who became vicar in 1554, resigned his living in 1559.

Complete records of baptisms, marriages and burials were not kept within the church until Elizabethan times and the first register, now held at the County Record Office in Bedford, dates back to 1559. Faded but still legible, it makes fascinating reading.

In 1583 the 29th vicar – Jeremlah Radcliffe, part of a noble Lancashire family, educated at Trinity College Cambridge, was one of the translators of the King James Bible, which we know as the Authorised Version.

18TH CENTURY

The Glebe Terrier of 10th April in the "*seventh year of the Reigne of Our Sovereigne Lady Anno, 1708*", signed by Henry Stonestreet, Vicar, tells us that "*The Vicarage house is built with Timber and covered with thatch it containes three Roomes on the ground ffloor two whereof are floord with brick and the other with earth and five upper Rooms floord with Boards... All the small Tythes throughout the parish are due to the Vicar (except such as arise in Eaton Parke inclosed Grounds for which John Huxley Esqr pays a Modus of Three pounds six shillings & eightpence by half yearly payments including also the Liberty of commoning a flock of sheep above Ioknell way with payment of Tythe in kind for them) and are paid as follows ... Lambs are due at the feast of St Mark that is to say threepence for each Lamb or half a crown for the Tenth or the Lamb in kind Claves the tenth of the price for which they are sold if weaned sixpence the calf instead of milk twopence for each Milch Cow is due at Lammas by the name of Tythe-white the tenth Piggs when Markettable the owner to separate one & the Vicar to make his choice out of the remainder if under ten the Vicar drivas that is he is to be paid out of the next Litter numbring ye former till he comes to the tenth. The tenth part of Wool Pidgeons Apples Pears Honey & Wax, walnuts & all Orchard fruite is due to the Vicar, for Geese none due Eggs payable in Lent two for every hen & three for every Cock Smoak & Garden one penny each. There is no underwood growing in the parish nor any Hemp flax or Turnips sown.'*

The Furniture of the Church consisted of '*one Bible two common prayer books, a Linnen Surplice five Bells The Book of Martyrs in three Vol'... for the Communion a pewter fflaggon, a Silver Chalice with a cover, it holds about a pint one linnen cloth for the Communion Table one Damask napkin one pewter patten the pulpit cushion is of purple cloth with a pulpit cloth of the same, two chests & two Register Books the date of the oldest is 1559.'*

According to the same Glebe Terrier of 1708, the church maintained the local bull and boar. No mention is made of charging for their services!

The offices of Clerk and Sexton were filled by "one p'son appointed by the Vicar who hath for his wages fourpence a house besides the accustomed dues vizt for the Buryall of a Growne person one shilling & fourpence of a child one shilling for a Marriage by Banns one shilling by Licence two shillings & for a Christning sixpence lien."

VICTORIAN ENGLAND

In the west corner of the churchyard lies Gregory Edward Whyley, vicar from 1825 until his death in 1871, and his wife Jane. It was Whyley who had built, at his own expense, the National School in what was then the vicarage garden. The School opened in April 1842 and he and his family taught at the school for some years, until Eaton Bray School was built in 1861.

Little money appears to have been spent on the church for many years. In the Northampton Mercury of February 8th 1847 appeared this report:

'The usual plastering has done much towards obscuring all the beautiful ornaments which may be found here Two pews are stuffed into the chancel. There is a very common altar-table, the floor is paved with tiles fit only for a barn or scullory. Some fine old specimens of open benches remain; but, as enclosed pews are making their appearance, we fear, ere long, they will be permitted entirely to supersede the venerable open sittings

Shouldering the pulpit is a coal cellar. A stove has a chimney shaft piercing the roof, and the fire-place was left in a state that we believe the humblest of the congregation would not suffer in his own cottage. Some tins, dirty with tallow grease, indicate the folly of shutting out the light from the west, which was most clumsily effected by an organ, with some ugly board, painted black.'

The economy of the parish, based mainly on straw plaiting and duck farming, was at a low ebb, and no restoration work was done. Twenty years later in March 1872 Robert W. Edis, architect, reported he had "never seen a church so utterly neglected, in such a shameful state of decay and dilapidation, or one which could more fairly be said to be an utter disgrace to the religious enlightenment and feeling of the 19th Century."



The Reverend John Hall Doe, vicar from 1871, was overwhelmed by the enormity of the task. The church was closed and services moved to the schoolhouse between February 1875 and June 5th 1884. Apart from the shoring up of parts of the north aisle in 1872 and the demolition of the later parts of the curious oblong western tower, only a little restoration was done to the nave, and the north aisle and porch, despite a faculty for a full restoration being obtained in 1875. An entry in the Parish Register records that "In 1880 James Smallbones, 26, was killed by a fall of stone while engaged in pulling down the old Tower."

In 1860 the chancel was restored at the expense of Trinity College Cambridge, to be used for the first time on 7th April 1861, Easter Day, according to Church Restoration Committee records. Sadly Doe had an unfortunate capacity for making enemies and, within three or four years of coming to the parish, he had lost the support of the wealthier parishioners. His abortive attempts at running a duck farm and at market gardening on the glebe typified the lack of success which dogged his whole career. His exodus, in 1890, came when he preached a dramatic sermon at evensong – tore off his surplice – and flung it into the congregation.



19th CENTURY RESTORATION

He was succeeded by Reverend Edwin Sutton in 1890, who was to be responsible for the main period of restoration. The arrival in 1886 of the Wallace family, whose nursery provided new employment in the village, combined with Sutton's energetic approach, brought about a change and, in 1891, work began. Alwyn, Bishop of Ely, recognised the urgency of the task and gave his personal permission for the restoration of the north aisle. Funds were short and the work was undertaken gradually over a long period from 1891 to 1916. Church records show that £3,500 was spent in the 23 years to 1914.

During the 19th Century nearly all Churches in England underwent some form of restoration, some with more enthusiasm than skill, and St. Mary's was indeed fortunate to have Robert Edis who supervised so carefully the restoration of the old building, and Jeffrey Sharrett, a local builder and family firm.

The restoration was finally completed in the middle of World War I, and the church tower was re-opened and the bells dedicated by the Bishop of St. Albans on 20th September 1916. A plaque on the east wall reads:

"The organ was erected in 1923 as a memorial of the Restoration carried out 1890 – 1916, Edwin Sutton being Vicar, W.E. Wallace and W. Groom Churchwardens."

In 1925, insurance certificates show that the church owned two silver cups dated 1730 and 1864, and two 'patens' (shallow dishes used for bread at the Eucharist) dated 1730 and 1774, the four together valued at £35 for insurance and stated to be in good condition.

In the same year the church's possessions were listed in the register as:

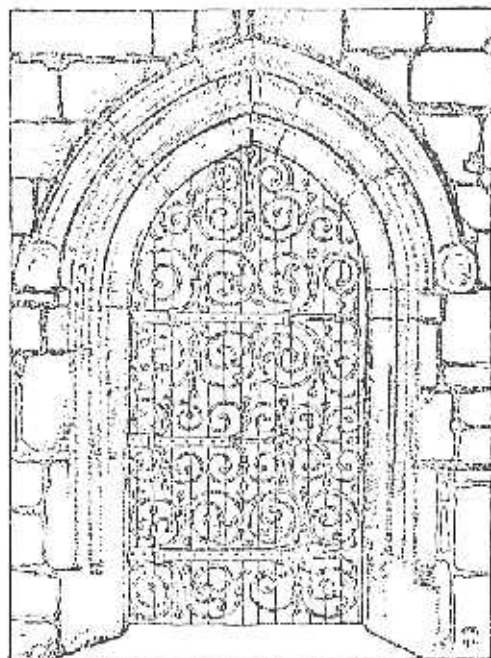
- 2 Fire Hooks (rare);
- very fine Ironwork on door;
- Brass in chancel, on wall;
- Altar Table circa 1600 in good condition;
- Chair in chancel, circa 1700 (broken);
- Chair in chancel, circa 1780;
- Old Screen (with new top);
- Old Chest in church dated 1675;
- Clock by Jasper Taylor.

SOUTH DOOR

As you enter the church by the south door you will notice some very fine late 13th century ironwork consisting of three hinges with ornamental scroll work, and a scroll ornament at the top of the door. It is attributed to the Bedfordshire iron worker, Thomas, a native of Leighton, who also made the iron grille of Queen Eleanor's tomb in Westminster Abbey.

During the restoration of the 1890s, the ironwork was removed in 4 complete pieces and replaced on the new door, which he also donated and installed, by Jeffrey Sharrett. Quite a feat of workmanship!

If you look carefully at the wall on the right hand side of the door, you can see the remains of a 'mass dial' on which in older days a hand pointed to the hour of the service.



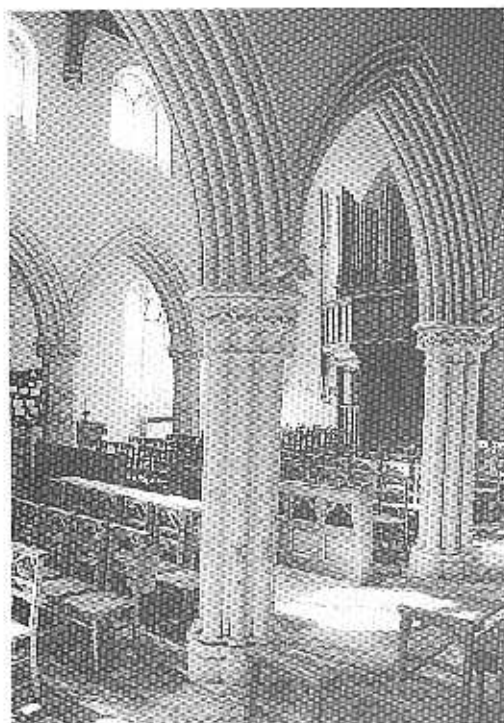
THE NAVE

The north arcade is a perfect example of the style of architecture of the 13th century. It consists of five bays with richly moulded arches resting on columns of eight shafts with beautifully carved foliate capitals, while the west arch springs from a cone shaped fluted corbel with a foliate capital.

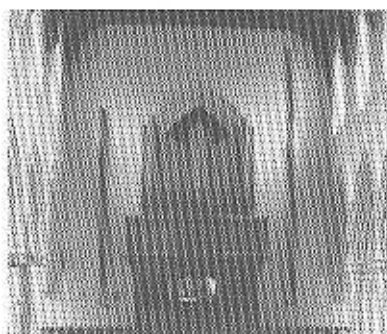
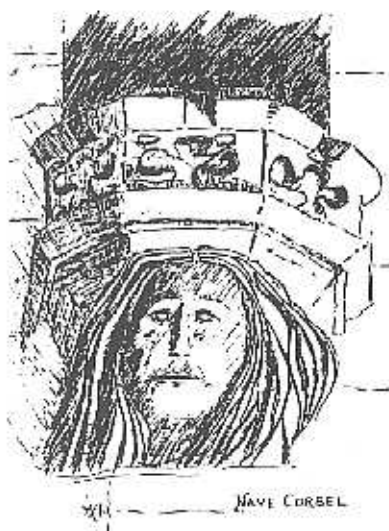
Mystery surrounds the fact that the north wall was designed with half arches intended to abut the arcade, but the corresponding springers on the columns are of a very flat pitch and give no indication whether they were in fact ever completed.

The south arcade also has five bays but the columns are carved with foliage of a much plainer character.

If you stand in the centre of the church and look upwards, you will notice that the axis of the sanctuary is off-set slightly. There are those who believe that this signifies Christ's head leaning on the Cross.



It is possible to see the line of the 13th Century roof above the arches of the columns. The roof was raised during the 15th Century and the clerestory windows added. The corbels (painted heads) are worth studying, as they apparently represented the people of the village living during the restoration of the church. One wonders why the little monkey is placed at the side of the Lady Chapel! It is only in recent years that they have been painted in distinctive colours.



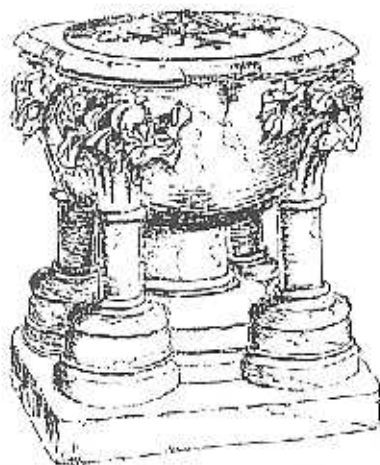
Thatching Hooks

On the rear wall of the nave, or either side of the organ, there are two great iron and oak thatching hooks. These were used to drag burning thatch from cottages and, possibly, the original church, before the days of the fire engine. What tales they could tell us

This photograph was taken prior to the replacement of the organ in 1991.

FONT

The font, which is near the south door, is of 13th Century origin. It has a round bowl on a central column. The four detached columns surrounding the central one have capitals beautifully carved with foliage like that of the north aisle. The wood cover was added in May 1923 to the memory of Reverend and Mrs Charles E.J. Carter 1916 – 1919. The font was restored thanks to the Bursar of Trinity College in 1855.



LADY CHAPEL

To the right of the entrance lies the small but attractive Lady Chapel. The beauty of the stone work round the east window in the chapel is probably of Sir Reginald Bray's design.

The stained glass in the window was designed and installed in 1900. The plaque reads:

"George Edward Whyley 46 years Vicar of this Parish 1825 - 1870 and Jane his wife. This window is dedicated by his son, Edward Bower Whyley and Florence his wife 1900."



The 16th Century communion table in this chapel should be noted, especially the curiously shaped 'melon' legs with their beautiful carvings. There is a 13th Century 'piscina' on the south wall which was used for washing sacred vessels after mass.

The statue of the 'Madonna and Child' at the front of the chapel was donated by C.E.J. Carter, Vicar 1920 - 1930.



On one of the stones in the south wall of this chapel can be seen a mark in the shape of a hemp bray (a pun on his name) used by Sir Reginald Bray as a building mark.

Monumental Brass

Sir Reginald Bray died childless and was succeeded by his nephew Edmund who afterwards became Lord Bray of Eaton. The only brass in the church is the one to the memory of Jane, Lady Bray, Edmund Bray's wife, who died on 5th March 1539. Lady Bray is dressed in period costume with a Paris head-dress, and is shown with her son and ten daughters. The inscription was formerly under the figure of a young gentlewoman on the Chancel floor. The palimpsest (re-used plate) was previously the bottom portion of the effigy of a Bishop or Abbot in pontificals and was no doubt monastic spoil re-worked for this brass. It reads:



*"I, Jane the daughter of Edmond Lord Bray
Under this stone lieth closed in clay
All ye my trendys I pray you pray for me
For as ye ar so I was, and as I am so shalt ye be
Oblit V^o die Marcij an^o dñi M.CCCCXXXIX"*

The lozenge shaped shields at the top of the brass show the Coats of Arms of the Halwell (Haleighwell), Norbery, Boteler, Sudeley, Montfort, Crozier and D'Abernnon families, but strangely not the arms of Bray.

The brass was in bad condition and in January 1953 it was cleaned and repaired by H.F.O. Evans M.B.E.F.S.A. of Oxford on behalf of the Monumental Brass Society. It was renovated again in 1986.

Oak Chests

There are three oak chests in the church (which were once used for storing altar cloths and robes), and these are dated 1673, 1692 and 1756.

Brass Plaque

On the wall at the back of the chapel is a brass plaque to:

"Mrs Edith Brandom 1934 A constant and devout worshipper. In many homes her kindly deeds made her justly beloved and respected."

Mrs Brandom, whose husband was foreman at the Wallace Nurseries, was the church caretaker for many years; among her many duties was the cleaning and filling of the oil lamps for the sum of 3/- per week. Electric lighting was installed in the church in 1928.

Heating was put into the church in October 1965 by the firm of Shirley & Charles of Letchworth.

CHANCEL

The chancel arch dates from 1320 though the chancel seems to have been rebuilt in the 15th Century, together with the nave chapels.



Although the perpendicular chancel windows are of 15th Century design, the glass has been replaced on several occasions. The beautiful stained glass east window above the altar was designed by Heaton Butler and Bayne of London in 1936 and presented by Annie Wallace.

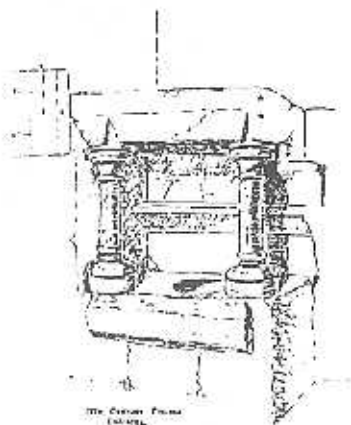
*"To the Glory of God and in commemoration of the
Silver Jubilee George V and Queen Mary"*

It portrays the story of the "root and branch of Jesse".

The reredos (carved screen) crafted by Christopher Webb depicts scenes from the life of Christ and the four disciples, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. It was added in 1951 by May Oates and Harriett Gray in memory of their parents, William and Annie Wallace. One of the figures had to be replaced after being stolen – can you see which one?

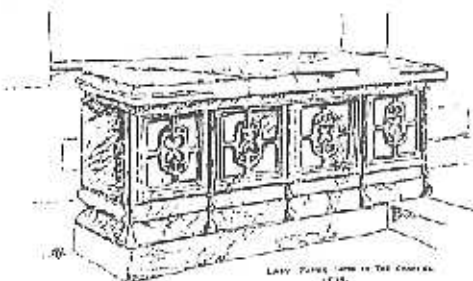
The high altar table was moved to the north chapel when the present oak table was presented by friends and family of William and Annie Wallace in 1944.

The sill of the south east window is kept low to form a sedilia (seat) and there is a 13th Century "piscina" with a deep basin which was used for washing sacred vessels after mass. You will also notice there is an aumbry (small cupboard reserved for the Blessed Sacrament).



Inserted in one of the windows, above the choir stall, is an inscription from Noel and Jean Lyster-Binns, 1980.

A Victorian oak screen used to divide the chancel from the nave of the church but this was removed in 1972. The top was carved by Tom George, churchwarden for many years, but this was sold after being in store for some while.



Under the north east window is the panelled altar tomb of Lady Jane whose brass is now in the Lady Chapel.

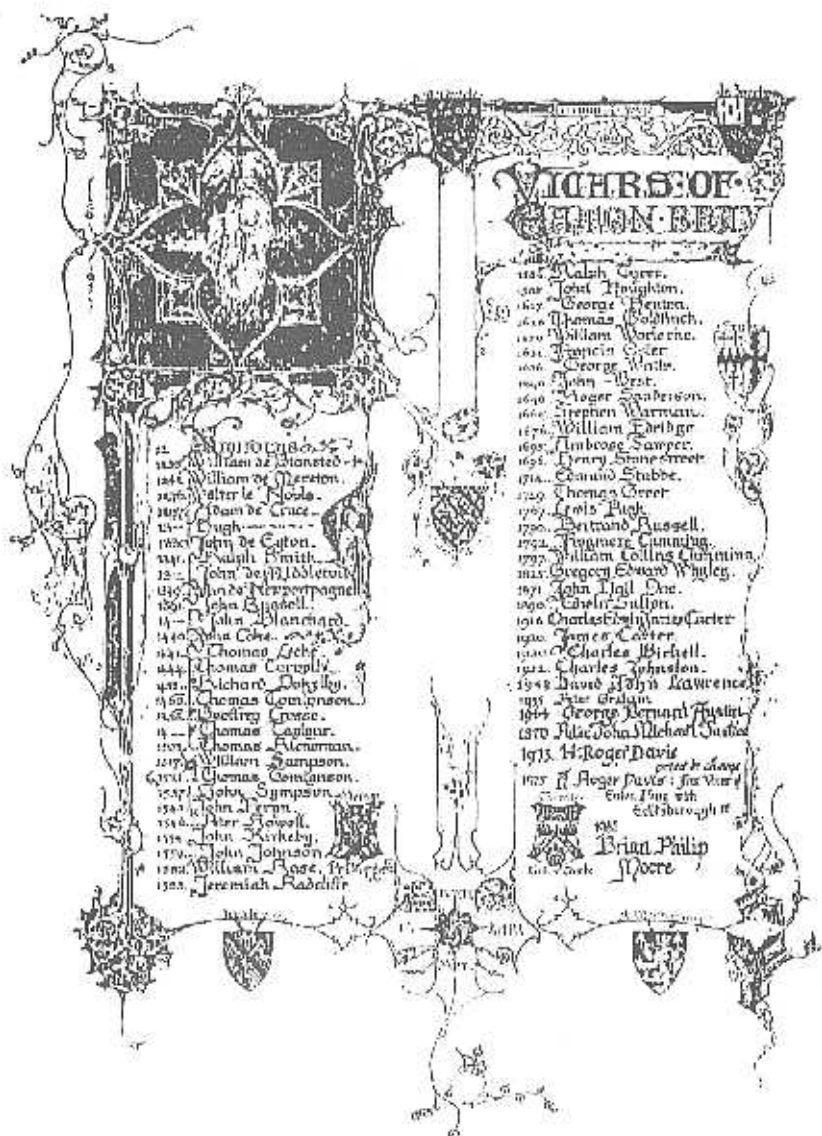
NORTH CHAPEL (often called Sharrett's Chapel)

The North Chapel, almost identical in size to the Lady Chapel, has several interesting features.

Above the altar is part of a 15th Century reredos which was repainted with the dove and given by family and friends of Bertha Thorne in 1979.

A hand scrolled record of the vicars of St. Mary's Eaton Bray dating back to '12....' hangs on the north wall and is reproduced here. Sadly some of the earlier entries are incomplete.

Mark Bonney became vicar in 1992, but his name was not entered on the scroll in time for inclusion in this edition.



Henry Stonestreet is believed to be buried by the North Chapel. He was vicar from 1696 until his death at the early age of 44 in 1714. He was also vicar of Totternhoe and chaplain to the Earl of Manchester. His slate coffin carries a long, but still legible inscription, which begins:

"sincerely lamented by all who knew him, on account of his singular merit and piety which would have adorned a higher station but which taught him to be content in that he was in"

The aumbry in the north wall (small cupboard covered with a curtain) was installed in 1979. The Blessed Sacrament is reserved in this chapel for the sick, and is a focus for prayer and devotion. The lamp hanging in front was given in memory of Alfred John Justice 1906 – 1961.

At the back of the chapel you will also see a brass plaque in memory of Jeffrey Sharrett, a "builder and farmer" of Yew Tree Farm, Eaton Bray who died on 30th April 1930 aged 81. He had been much involved in the restoration work done in 1900.

The five-sided wooden pulpit dates back to the 18th Century while the lectern is of much more recent origin, being dated 1954, and is inscribed to Jeffrey Tearle, much loved verger of this church 1934 – 1952.

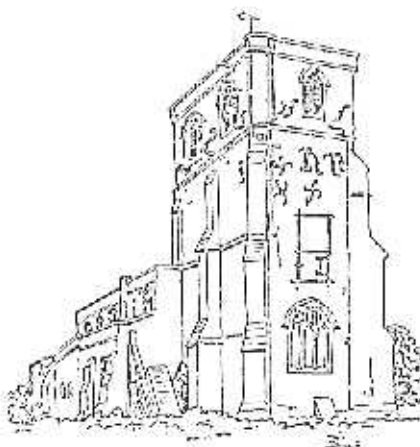
VESTRY

The vestry dates back to the 13th Century when it formed the base of the original tower. It was restored in the 15th Century and again at the turn of the 20th Century. An extension to the vestry, on the north side of the tower, was given in 1930 by Mr and Mrs W.E. Wallace in memory of their son who died 20th July 1926 aged 44 years. Water was first piped in in 1959.

TOWER

The original small tower was built in the 13th Century and was then extended westwards and heightened in the 15th Century by Sir Reginald Bray. Early prints of the church show the tower as a rather curious oblong structure. The top stage and western half of the tower were pulled down in 1880 as it was then almost in ruins and in a dangerous state. The west side was boarded up and a makeshift roof erected over the remains. The tower was completely restored during the early part of the 20th Century.

Thomas Huxley, an owner of Eaton Bray manor house, had a clock made for the house in 1737 by Jasper Taylor of Holborn. When Huxley died in 1742 he willed that the clock should remain a permanent fixture of the house and, when the manor house was demolished in 1794, the clock was removed to the church tower where it remains to this day. It was restored by Messrs. Thos. Bond and Son, Buryford, Oxon, in the early 20th Century. They also added the minute hand. Colin Anderson and Douglas Blank overhauled the clock in the 1970s.



The tower of Eaton Bray as remodelled by Sir Reginald Bray in the reign of Henry VII

From a drawing dated 1874

THE BELLS OF ST. MARY'S

The first documentary evidence relating to bells at Eaton Bray is to be found in a "Glebe Terrier" (church inventory) dated 10th April 1708. There were then five bells in the tower.

The two oldest bells were cast in 1656. The founder was one William Whitmore, whose initials and name occur on two of the bells. During the 19th Century, when the tower was partially demolished, the bells were doubtless taken down and replaced in the tower after the restoration.

Before the restoration there were five bells; these were recast and a sixth bell added in 1913; the rehunging was in 1916, the work having been staged over a three year period partly due to the Great War. They are tuned in the key of A flat. The tenor (or largest bell) weighs about 8½ cwt. The following inscriptions were kept:

Tenor – *"George Chandler made me 1705"*

Fifth – *'W W 1656, R.B., T.H. E.B. E.C.'*

Fourth – *'Edward Hall made me 1740'*

The Third bears the inscription which was on the old tenor or fifth bell –
*'W Pearson, Miller, R Gadsden Snr, R Ashwell, Churchwardens. H Morris,
R Gadsden Jnr, Overseers. J Bryant, Hertford, Fecit 1790'*

The Second bears the inscription formerly on the old fourth bell –
'Wm. Whitmore for Richard Burr and Tho. Howard E.B. E.C. 1656'

The Treble bell is inscribed – *"Has campanas reficiendas curaverant E.S. WEW
WG Victoris Christi Vox Mea testis erit"*

The recasting and rehunging of the bells was done by Messrs. Thos. Bond and Son, Burford, Oxon at a cost of £183.

The bells were overhauled again in 1959 by Messrs. Mears and Stainbank of Whitechapel at a total cost of £287.19s. The bells were rededicated on 21st July 1959 and are still in regular use.

When the Village Hall was being built in 1964 the builders discovered the bell founding pits while excavating for the stage basement. Unfortunately no photographs or drawings were taken.

TITHES AND CHARITIES

Until the 19th Century a yearly tithe (or one tenth) was levied on each household in the parish. This was used for the maintenance of the church and clergy and usually took the form of fresh produce or livestock.

Trinity College Cambridge arranged a gift of charity for the poor in the form of distribution of bread in October (index linked even in those days) to the value each year of: one quarter of wheat, one quarter of beans, one quarter of barley, 32 loaves, 10 lbs cheese and 14 gallons of beer!! According to the Charity Commission records, this arose out of an original endowment by the Bray family. It is said that at one time the gift took the form of corn thrown down from the church tower!

Another charity was an annual gift on St. Thomas' day to the value of 10s a year, provided in 1634 by the will of Hugh Cooke and distributed in 30 sums of 4d each to poor widows of the parish. This was known as the "widows' groats".

An Alms Box was given by Edward Bower and put up in the church on 3rd September 1858. At Christmas 1858 it contained 15s, and Christmas 1859 and 1860 £1.10s.

CHURCHYARD

The Churchyard was used during the 19th Century for burials but was closed by an Order in Council in 1882. There are several interesting headstones bearing the names of families that have been associated with the village for many years.

In 1970 responsibility for the maintenance of the churchyard was handed over to the Parish Council. It is now used only for interment of ashes, and a Book of Remembrance is kept on display in the church.

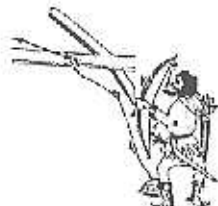
A commemorative cross to the villagers who lost their lives in both World Wars is situated in the Churchyard.

RECENT RESTORATION

In the early 1960s, during the celebration of a communion, the unexpected descent from on high of a deathwatch beetle caused some consternation, and necessitated the treatment and replacement of parts of the chancel.

Another major restoration was undertaken during the 1970s when the whole of the exterior stonework had to be repaired. The redecoration was completed in 1980 and gave us the bright interior and beautifully painted corbels and side chapel reredos (carved screen). The corbels (painted heads) were individually paid for by parishioners on a sponsor basis.

A Festival of Thanksgiving was held. This included a Flower Festival, and the nylon cord which held the garlands of flowers was shot over the roof beams by England's only professional archer who lived in Leighton Buzzard.



KNEELERS

The visitation of 1836 ordered that 'hassocks or other things be made, convenient for people to kneel'.

A project to embroider new kneelers commenced in 1981. The kneelers are all individually designed and worked, but are unified by a common border design worked in one of three background colours – scarlet (Nave), royal blue (Lady Chapel) and deep green (North Chapel). Each kneeler is embroidered in a choice of up to six colours from a range of ten used in the project and complementary to the existing church fabrics.



The kneelers add to the beauty of the church and serve as a pictorial history of its life, surroundings, and the people who have worshipped and visited here. The designs include many aspects of church life, traditional subjects, tributes, special achievements and memories, as well as complex abstract styles. Many people have been involved in the project, both in the village and as far away as America and New Zealand.

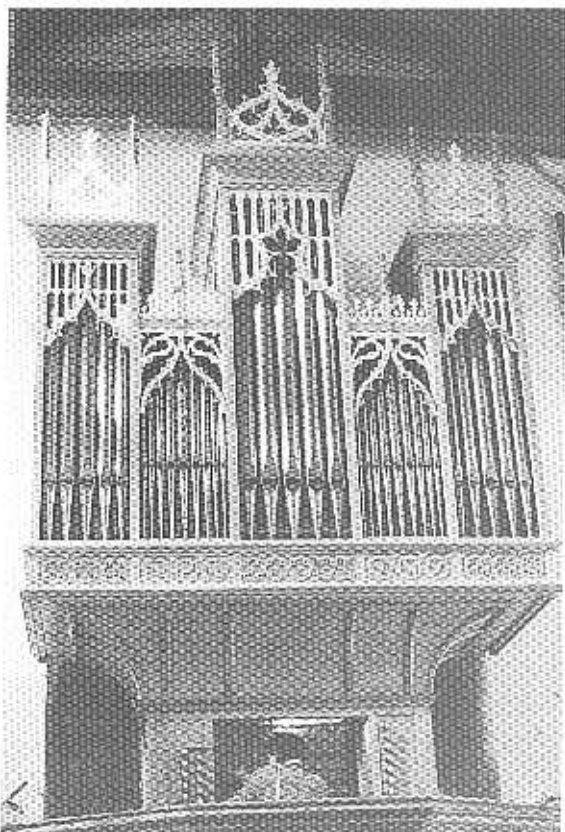
MUSIC IN THE CHURCH

According to Church Restoration Committee records, an "organ opened the 6th January 1840, paid for by subscription and the sale of 20 poplar trees round the Churchyard", this being the earliest traceable mention of any music in the church. The same records state that "the organ (was) considerably enlarged and repaired by subscription at a cost of £40 and re-opened on July 25th, St. James Day, 1856". It was at this time that a new organ gallery was erected.

A new two manual pipe organ of the tracker action pattern of the Sweetland Organ Building Company of Bath's design, was installed in 1923, opening on July 5th. It was overhauled in 1945, and rebuilt in 1959 with a new electric action.

By 1986 the organ was showing signs of unreliability and was in need of another major overhaul. Dr Christopher Dearnley, Director of music at St. Pauls Cathedral, London, visited the church and not only made a valuable report, but continued to advise the PCC until 1988.

A specification was drawn up by Dr Dearnley, for a two manual tracker action instrument of comprehensive specification which included mutations, mixture and a pedal reed. The task of building the new organ was entrusted to Peter Collins of Redbourne, Herts. A Fund raising committee was formed under the chairmanship of Graham Chappell, then churchwarden, and the necessary £55,000 was raised by much hard work, donations and sponsorship, within four years. The opening recital was given on 7th December 1991 by John Scott, successor to Dr Dearnley at St. Paul's Cathedral.



EDLESBOROUGH AND EATON BRAY

In 1975 Eaton Bray and Edlesborough were merged into one ecclesiastical parish, the lovely Church of St. Mary the Virgin, Edlesborough being closed for regular worship.

NORTH CHILTERN'S GROUP OF PARISHES

This parish is a part of the North Chilterns Group of Parishes, which was formed by Order in Council in 1982. It comprises the seven parishes of Totternhoe, Stanbridge, Tilsforth, Kensworth, Studham, Whipsnade and Eaton Bray with Edlesborough which includes Dagnall. The prime aim of the Group is one of support for each member parish and a sharing of resources.

.....

This church continues to provide a focus for active worship and service to God and the Christian community in the villages. Times of services are indicated on the notice-boards and you are warmly invited to join us.

THIS GUIDE HAS BEEN GENEROUSLY SPONSORED BY:

Peter and Rosemarie Allen

Ruth Barnett

in memory of Harry Barnett – February 21st 1942 to April 7th 1974

Jean Betts in memory of Edward C.J. Betts – 1926 to 1986

Julia Bradshaw, who moved into Eaton Bray in 1981, became an active member on various Church Committees, and is a member of the PCC (Feb 1993)

Mr & Mrs Philip Day

Lilian Mary Dowdy – Sacristan from 1978 to 1988

Mrs Joan Elworthy

Denis Good

in memory of Enid Good – 3rd September 1938 to 27th September 1972

C. Hayden

in honour of all those baptised in this Church throughout the centuries

Ann Hunt, in memory of Dennis Richard Hunt – 1934 to 1992 – whose last 8 years of life spent in the village of Eaton Bray were ones of happiness and contentment

Mr & Mrs J. Kimber

with happy memories of our daughters' weddings on 31.8.91 and 9.5.92

John James Laing – in memory of Ruby Bunker, died May 1990

Margie, Carolyn and Peter Lashmar

Richard & Ethel Reay of The Orchards, Eaton Bray
who renewed their Marriage vows in August 1986

Audrey & Keith Reynolds
to celebrate the blessing of the
Marriage of our daughter Angela
to Douglas on 27th August 1988 at St. Mary's

Gladys D. Ruffett – who joined the church in 1927

Edna & Andrew Schofield
in memory of Allan Schofield – born 1917, died 1990,
verger at this Church from 1985 - 1990

Mrs Win Sear

Gladys Smith, whose husband Bob (born 1906) and father Bert
had both been church wardens

Sam and Sheila Twivy, regular communicants for thirty years

Mrs Mabel Walker

Tim, Chris and Anthony Woodley

Ann Worley
in memory of Douglas M. Worley of Dunstable – 1932 to 1988

Plus many other anonymous donations

ARTS & CRAFTS

Est. 1969

*The shop in a shed
Large stock of crafts –
Hand made pottery,
Walking sticks, Gifts etc.*

Slicketts Lane, Edlesborough
Open Daily 9.30 - 6.00

0525 220255

EDLESBOROUGH AUTOS

WALTON END GARAGE,
PEBBLEMOOR, EDLESBOROUGH,
TELEPHONE: (0525) 222224

Our opening hours for
petrol sales and shop are:
Mon - Fri 7.30am-7.00pm
Sat 8.30am-6.00pm

Come and see us for
MOT's • Service and Repairs
Accident Repair Work



Mine Hosts
David & Janet Sparrow

The White Horse

Market Square, Eaton Bray
(200 YARDS NORTH OF THE CHURCH)

*CHARMING OLDE WORLDE ATMOSPHERE
BAR FOOD THAT IS EXCITING & ORIGINAL
FULL A LA CARTE RESTAURANT (EVENINGS)
LARGE CAR PARK AND GARDEN AT REAR
PRIVATE PARTIES CATERED FOR*

The Swan

A warm welcome to the village
from the Rust family

*Leighton Road, Northall
Nr. Dunstable, Beds. LU6 2EY
TEL: EATON BRAY 220444*

SMALL RESTAURANT AVAILABLE
BAR MEALS - MAINLY HOME MADE
BAR B Q DURING SUMMER MONTHS
CASK CONDITIONED REAL ALE
OUTSIDE BARS A SPECIALITY
BAR TERRACE WITH LARGE
CHILDREN'S PLAY AREA
LIVE MUSIC EVERY WEDNESDAY EVENING

The Bell

Church End, Edlesborough, Bucks
Tel: Eaton Bray (0525) 220314
Teresa & Colin Colbert

Good value home made meals served daily
12.00 - 2pm & 7-9.30pm (except Mon. evenings)



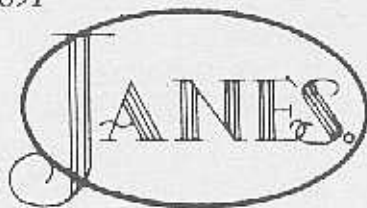
The Rule & Square



1 Brownlow Avenue, Edlesborough,
Nr. Dunstable, Beds. LU6 2JE
Tel: (0525) 220999

*Neil and Gerald Day
extend a warm welcome to everybody
Restaurant & Bar Snacks available
Open 7 days a week*

*We have served these
villages since
1891*



2 - 6 HIGH STREET, EDLESBOROUGH

*Are we
serving you?*

Finishing Touches

Sparrow Hall Farm, Edlesborough
Tel: (0525) 222636

*Dried Flowers
Baskets ~ Crafts
Upholstery
Pine Furniture*

Tea & Coffee Shop ~ Snacks

Open 10am-1pm & 2pm-5pm Tuesday to Friday
10am-5pm Saturday & Sunday