

**CHURCH OF  
SS PETER & PAUL**

**BOOK IV of CLARE, SUFFOLK**

*David Hatton*

# Book IV Church of SS Peter & Paul, Clare, Suffolk

## CHURCH OF SS PETER & PAUL CLARE, SUFFOLK

### INTRODUCTION

Daniel Defoe (1659-1731), author of the book Robinson Crusoe, visited Clare on his travels and says of it '*a poor town and dirty, the streets being unpaved. But it has a good church*'.

His last sentence was correct. Clare's church can claim to have a place among the large and beautiful churches for which East Anglia is renowned. I leave open the question whether the street cleaners of the day were up to standard, but its buildings as seen today certainly cannot require the word 'poor'. Many of them are described in the fuller book referred to above. Among the old buildings described there are some which have been related to the church - the nearby old priest's house known now as The Ancient House; its one time successor as a vicarage across the road, Sigors, now also superseded by a new vicarage next-door; and the Guildhall from which guilds processed into the church through the same west door which is still used on special occasions today.

I have tried to write for ordinary people so have inserted explanations which may be unnecessary for those who are keen explorers of churches but may prove helpful to the ordinary reader - including, perhaps, young people still at school. With this in mind I have also woven in fuller explanations of some features which are common to most churches, so in some sense the book widens out from being an account simply of Clare parish church into an introduction to churches in general.

On limited occasions when mentioning architectural features I have included technical phrases of the kind which describe Clare church by saying '*it consists of a clerestoried chancel of three bays flanked by chapels of two bays, with north and south porches, and a chapel east of the latter, and a squat western tower*', feeling it may prove to be an advantage to keep such official descriptions on record. More simple descriptions appear in the guides on sale in the church.

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### 1) AN ACCOUNT OF THE CHURCH

**THE ORIGIN OF THE CHURCH** is unknown.

There is no mention of the building of the church in old records. The Domesday Book mentions a church dedicated by a Saxon owner to St John and served by Ledmar the priest, but this was at the castle, and is not to be identified with the parish church. One ancient deed records that there was a church of St Paul in Clare in 1090. In general, earlier churches were of wood, so there was less chance of buildings remaining. Stone did not come into widespread use for church building until the 11th century. Probably one of the Clare lords was responsible for the re-building or extending of an earlier Saxon church. There are no traces of the earlier churches, except that the lower part of the tower pre-dates the rest of the church, so was presumably part of, or perhaps a later addition to, an earlier one.

Pevsner described the graveyard as treeless, but trees have now been added, following the general tradition through the ages of hinting at eternity through the presence of the long-lived yew, and on some sites the continuation of a holy place on what was originally the location of pagan worship with its sacred grove - as the pope had instructed St Augustine of Canterbury when planting new churches in England many centuries earlier.

**THE MAIN DATES OF THE CHURCH.** The tower, which is at the west end, shows traces of mid-13th century work in its lower stages, the upper part and belfry windows are 14th century, and the main west window was inserted in the 15th century. A reconstruction of the church took place around 1380. This included the addition of the south porch and the adjacent chapel. The north porch was added about 1400. Major changes took place around 1460, when the roof of the nave was raised, aisles were added (which can be clearly seen by an encroachment on the south porch), a clerestory (top row of windows) was inserted, and the chancel was enlarged. The chancel was virtually rebuilt in 1617, having gravely deteriorated since its origin in 1478. The original position of the south wall can be estimated from two features: 1) From outside the church it will be seen that the northern edge of the window at the west end of the south aisle reveals remnants of an earlier window and therefore the former position of the wall. 2) The earlier roofline still visible inside the church on the west (back) wall can be traced down to estimate where the roof pitch used to end and the wall begin. These features suggest the original south wall ran from about the position of the second mullion of the present window. The earlier roofline is also visible on the northern side of the west wall.

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The church registers go back to 1558, and churchwardens' accounts to 1595.

### **EXTERNAL FEATURES**

**THE TOWER** is of dressed stone and knapped flint, with some Roman brick. Guide books often say it is very squat for the size of the church, but the answer may well be that it suited the earlier building of which it formed part. A square vice or **appendage on the tower's south side** contains steps to the upper floors. The wooden structure at the top is an example of the kind of **wooden frame** or cage which is a feature of local churches and which nowadays often houses the clock bell, but no doubt was originally intended for the sanctus bell, advising townfolk in general that the host was being raised during the service of mass. Surmounting the tower is the traditional **weathercock** as ordered for every church by Rome in the 9th century. This can be thought of as symbolising the need for vigilance (recalling the gospel story of Peter's denial) or depicting resurrection (the cock ushering in a new day) or may just reflect old folk-lore which claimed that a cock indicated the weather by the position in which it stood. A prayer composed by the Revd. Frank Swithinbank, Vicar of Clare 1931-1962, for a re-dedication after damage in 1957 and used again in 1992 says: *'Almighty God, who didst warn Thy apostle St Peter by the crowing of a cock that he should not deny Thee, grant that those who look up to this weathervane may likewise be warned never to take Thy Holy Name in vain. Grant that the farmers and all who cultivate the land may be helped as to when to plough, when to sow, and when to reap, that all men may thank Thee for Thy good providence'*.

The 13th century **west doorway** (the end of the church reaching to the road) has two orders of shafts and a hood-mould with two bands of small dogtooth and nailhead carvings. The fine 15th century **west window** has a carved frieze below on which the chevron arms of the Clare lords can still be identified, but other coats of arms are unrecognisable, having been defaced, apparently deliberately. There are also **lancet windows**. Major work on the tower carried out in 1899 to renew the interior is mentioned in a later note on the bells.

**THE REST OF THE BUILDING** appears largely to consist of the same kind of materials as were used in Clare castle, which was falling into ruin at the time so might have contributed some material. Some repair work was later carried out in brick. Some remains of Roman brick have finished up in the church walls.

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Two octagonal **crocketed turrets** capped by stone spires and sometimes likened to pepper pots are a distinctive feature of the church and contain the top of stairs leading from the floor to the roof, giving access to the position of the former rood loft en route. As usual there are a number of **gargoyles**, created to throw rain water away from the walls and adapted for continued use when gutters and fall pipes were invented. Various suggestions are made for gargoyles' forms - that they were the result of builders' whims, that they represent human vices, perhaps the deadly sins, or that they express the thought of evil spirits being ejected from churches in contrast to angels carved inside. There are also fleurons (flower patterns) in the exterior **string course** - the ornamental horizontal band high in the wall. The **priest's door**, along the south side of the church towards the far end, is carved handsomely. The surrounding stonework makes it look as if it may once have been taller.

### THE SOUTH PORCH

This, the usual entrance to the church, probably dates from about 1380. The public notices there nowadays can serve as a reminder that, as with most churches, in addition to parts of church services being held there, the porch was the official place for announcing and conducting much of the town's business. This included, in the case of Clare, the payment of legacies. Clare's south porch has two **windows** with Y-tracery on the west side, **stone seats**, and a finely groined **roof**, the groining springing from engaged shafts, with carved bosses. Parts of the vaulting and of one window were lost when the porch was shortened by the 15th century widening of the church, leaving only one and a half of its original two bays. This feature provides an easily recognisable result of that reconstruction of the church and can also be observed clearly from the outside.

The **central figure in the roof**, where the vault ribbing crosses, seems to be a representation of Jesus, the plaited effect on the head probably representing the crown of thorns. If foliage also exists here it may be merely the decorative feature which often appears in bosses, but there might be another allusion, mentioned in the article on the Green Man in Appendix A. The **figure immediately above the church door** and disfigured by the reconstruction may be a Green Woman, counterpart of the more common Green Man, and quite rare. The ten faces in the outer two ranges of **figures around the stone doorway** may be examples of the Green Man in one of his usual forms, but see the article in Appendix A for some doubts about this. The six figures in the inner range here appear to be heraldic lions, similar to those on the stringcourse inside the church.

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There is a **crypt** below the porch, and a **chamber** above.

The **door into the church** is carved out of one piece of wood and is probably 16th century, although some date it earlier. It has fine carving and tracery, and is of the cat and kitten variety - a smaller door set in a larger one. At its edge, about two metres above ground level, there is a **carving each side**, one the symbol of St Peter (the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven) and the other of St Paul (the sword mentioned in his epistles, and instrument of his martyrdom). These are the saints to whom the church is dedicated. The Clare chevron arms, which originated with the lords of Clare, also appear here, one metre above ground. Other carvings include the well-known beakhead motif, and foliage trails including the vine and bunches of grapes. Some of the angels in the doorway have lost their heads, possibly as a result of the action of those who attacked images on religious grounds over the years, although vandalism does not always require even such a reason. In its present state one appears remarkably like Winston Churchill! (See Section 2 for an article on the damage done in the visit of William Dowsing).

A **private entrance to the church** was claimed to be used by pupils from the school which was based at Clare Priory in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but no indication is given as to what was meant by this.

### **THE SOUTH AISLE**

The **FONT**, dating from around 1380 or perhaps early 15th century, has quatrefoils with defaced heraldic arms on the bowl panels and a blank side where it presumably once stood against a wall or pillar. It has tracery designs, like windows, on the shaft - in this respect perhaps not as interesting as those many fonts with pictures of the sacraments or Biblical or other scenes, and even such creatures as woodwoses. The base, of Portland stone, was bought in 1845 for £1.10s.0d. The font has a simple locked cover. Covers were mainly for seemliness and to protect against pollution by dust, despite the common belief that they were to protect the holy water from possible misuse by witches - which they could have taken from the stoup anyway.

### **THE GALLERY STANDING TO THE RIGHT INSIDE THE**

**CHURCH DOOR** is a Jacobean gallery pew of the 17th century presumably built by Sir Thomas Barnardiston, whose initials appear, together with the date 1604, in the panelled room at the Priory. Sometimes known as the Priory Pew, it was used by the families of Clare Priory during its time of private ownership - the period between its loss to the Austin friars

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in 1538 under the Dissolution of the monasteries and its restoration to them in 1953. The gallery was removed in 1883 because deterioration made it unsafe, but it was repaired and returned as a memorial to General Sir George Barker of the Priory by his widow Lady Barker in 1914. It has nicely turned newel posts and balusters to its staircase, which is at the rear. Details from the **Barnardiston family cresting** appear at the top, including the crosses crosslet (a cross with a smaller cross at each of the four points), the bittern, and the horse or ass's head (these last being in heraldic form, which is not true to nature). There are also **shields, and a monk** - a bearded face with tonsured head, looking through a crescent moon.

**THE AREA ADJACENT TO THE SOUTH PORCH** and behind the pew-gallery was formerly one of two chapels on this south side, though neither has a piscina now. Built in 1380, its windows are noticeably different from the majority of windows in the church. It was presumably the chapel of St John the Baptist, because that is said to have been in the south aisle. It was most probably used by the Guild of St John which was especially associated with the hamlet of Chilton. It has sometimes been known as the Priory Chapel for the same reason as the Gallery obtained its sometime name. Its 14th century **arch** was moved and reconstructed in its new position when the church was widened around 1460.

A family **vault** and an ossuary (bonehole) are beneath the chapel and porch. A diary of 1803 referring to the funeral of Mr William Shrive, then owner of the Priory, describes the vault at that time as '*a beautiful little chapel underground, with groined arches*'.

The **nativity window** was installed in 1885 when the gallery-pew which now obscures it was missing (see above). At the top a dove represents the Holy Spirit. Angels at worship and the four evangelists are portrayed next. Matthew, Mark, and Luke hold their gospels, and the youthful John shown, as is traditional, holding a chalice with a serpent - an allusion to words in St Mark's gospel (Mark 16.18) and a legend that John survived a challenge from Aristodemus to drink poison from a serpent as an act of faith. Again as is traditional, one of the three kings is black, while Joseph has a staff, suggesting his age. The lily at Mary's feet is a typical symbol of her.

A **window** on the east side shows the **resurrection** scene. At the top, angels are singing from unrolled scrolls of music. Another angel appears before the empty tomb, pointing upwards to suggest resurrection. The picture is a conglomerate one. The four Gospels give differing lists of those present at the tomb so identification of those portrayed here cannot be certain, but red



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and blue garments are often used for Mary the mother of Jesus, and free-flowing hair often indicates Mary Magdalene. Incidentally the usual identification of Mary of Magdala with 'the sinner' is conjecture and is due to a conflation of three different Biblical stories and their characters.

The window high in the opposite wall indicates the **room above the porch**. Such rooms were sometimes used by a priest, sometimes as a schoolroom.

Two 19c **hatchments** (funeral arms) hang above the entrance to the chapel. These, and many of the tablets and other features found in this chapel, are associated with the Barker family, owners of the Priory for many years.

When nobility died their hatchment revealing married status etc which had been hanging outside the house since the death was brought into the church, in the same way as in earlier days a knight's armour finished up there. The hatchment on the left is that of Lieutenant Colonel John Barker, who died in 1804. The one on the right is that of his widow, Caroline, who died in 1848. (See Appendix B for more on hatchments). The medieval ironbound **chest** is where church records and treasures were kept. Orders were given in 1199 for chests to be placed in all churches to collect money for the crusades. They usually had several locks so the co-operation of several people, each holding a different key, was required before access could be obtained.

A **window** near the south chapel dates from the 1880s and depicts **Faith, Hope and Charity**. The anchor symbolises Hope, the cross represents Faith, while Charity is symbolised by the giving of bread to children. Triangles and three interlocking circles, symbols of the Trinity, appear in the decoration, together with roses, which have a variety of Christian interpretations or could suggest the Houses of York and Lancaster.

### **THE CHANTRY CHAPEL**

A construction near the organ is worth considering in detail. There are marks inside at its west end where a seat once existed. Marks at the east end of the north side seem to indicate the position of a lectern, with burns above caused by the snuffing out of candles presumably used during reading. These features suggest the structure was once used as a chantry.

The north side and west end each consist of a panelled base with a fine cresting running along the top. In its present state the structure's east end, facing the organ, clearly does not belong to the rest, for it consists of a remnant of the church's 15th century chancel screen, still in its original screen position. However, the chantry's woodwork at that point indicates it probably once had its own east end, so the structure could have stood

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independently, presumably somewhere other than its present position near the organ.

The cresting includes a monogram which is a conflation of the letters M.A.R.I.A. surmounted by a crown. This symbol was very common throughout East Anglia by the 15th and 16th centuries, and is a badge asserting Mary as Queen of Heaven. Usually this monogram has a single line or chevron in the left half. This one, however, has been modified for use in Clare, because it has a threefold chevron, the badge of the Clare lords. The Clare version has a further addition – a griffin as a supporter on each side. This mythical animal with forequarters of an eagle and hindquarters of a lion was used by Edward III in his private seal, and also by some of his successors, some members of whose families married into the Clare line.

There are also pomegranates in the cresting. These could be merely decorative, but a pomegranate was the badge of Granada in Spain and appeared in the coat of arms of Catherine of Aragon. A local connection between Catherine and the people of Clare is that when, as Henry VIII's wife, she had been given some control over the area, she made a gift of land to the people of Clare for pasture purposes – the common. It may be of interest to add that when a pomegranate was coupled with a sheaf of silver arrows it came to symbolise resistance to Henry VIII's divorce and consequently to the new organisation of the Church in England, but the arrows and pomegranate were later adopted by Mary, who tried to return the Church to the jurisdiction of Rome.

The chantry's cresting has an odd piece attached to each end. One of these bears a motif very different from all the others. It consists of a more elaborate crown surmounting a quatrefoil with cherubim as supporters, and remains a mystery. The cresting has extensions at each end to make it fit the base, seeming to suggest that the two were once separate from each other. However, the mouldings, chamfer etc on both are the same, meaning that it probably was, in fact, all one piece. The decorative shallow arches in the base are in the Tudor style, which dates it between 1400 and 1537. The view of Sir William St John Hope, an antiquarian who lived in Clare and published notes on the church early in the 20th century, was that it '*was set up about the time of Henry VIII as an entreclose of a chantry altar*'.

It was suggested above that the chantry once stood somewhere other than in its present position. There are appropriate places within the church. The northeast chapel used to have a large window depicting the Assumption of Mary and was dedicated to her, so the construction might have stood in that

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chapel. Again, old records often mention a guild of St Mary in Clare. Guilds frequently had their own area in their local church, with a representation of the guild's patron - which in this case was, of course, Mary - so this is another possibility.

The **ringers' gotch** or beer jug inscribed '*Clare Ringers 1729*' (near the chantry screen and organ) was given to the bell-ringers by the vicar. It is nearly fifty centimetres high and holds 18 litres (32 pints). It has a pun in its inscription '*campana sonant canore*' (the bells ring in harmony) for this phrase links together three factors - the bellringers, the Six Bells inn which used to stand in the north-west corner of the present graveyard (their likely meeting-places), and the vicar at the time, the Revd Matthew Bell, whose marriage had brought quite a lot of local property into his hands including the Six Bells inn. But one wonders whether the bell-ringers really sung in harmony after emptying the jug? Records speak of the manager innkeeper of the nearby Bell Hotel filling it on its hundredth birthday, in 1829. The jug is made of semi-glazed earthenware and has a bell and crown embossed upon it, the bell perhaps making a further link to the vicar's name, and the crown perhaps to the Crown inn, owned by the vicar's family.

For **another south chapel** and **the organ** see below under The Chancel.

### **THE NAVE** (the main area of the church)

This was given greater height during the enlargement of the church around 1460. The clustered shafts of the 13<sup>th</sup> century - quatrefoiled and keeled columns with embattled (castle-like) capitals - were re-used by the addition of capitals and new bases of an unusual height. Traces of the earlier roofline are visible in the tower wall at the back of the church. The **window** in this wall was almost certainly for use when timing the ringing of the sanctus bell during mass, as the wooden structure on top of the tower probably confirms. The **area under the tower**, which has a lofty arch, was re-arranged in the early 2000s to provide a ground floor room for miscellaneous purposes, the bell-ringers being elevated to a floor above.

The church's beautiful **arches** are noteworthy for their widely spaced crockets (the decorative leaf-shaped feature).

Spaces between the arches contain carvings of the **heads of various dignitaries** - kings and queens, a merchant and a bishop are recognisable, and others may be benefactors or patrons. These can serve as reminders of the thousands of people of all kinds who have worshipped here over hundreds of years. Shafts running higher lead to **angels** with arms varying in three different postures of worship, reminding today's worshipper of an

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even wider context, some form of after-life, poetically expressed in those oft used words *'therefore with angels and archangels and all the company of heaven'*. The stone angels fit into an ornamental string course, where **fleurons** (flower patterns) and heraldic **lions' heads**, some with tongues out, also appear. The lion's head with a protruding tongue was a popular decoration at this time.

The **fourth roof beam** from the front is carved with names of churchwardens and a carpenter of 1804.

The **main beams** and wall plates of the nave roof have rows of battling (as also have both aisles) and one can assume that there used to be carved wooden figures here. Some may have been angels or the twelve apostles mentioned in William Dowsing's account of his visit here (see Section 2).

The **pews** are modern. In earlier days there were no seats and, indeed, this area in many churches was used for the holding of markets and general business and for revelry - often being a town's only large covered public space. In some churches there were a few stone benches by the wall - hence the expression 'the weak to the wall'. An interesting story from 1598 about seating in Clare church will be found in Section 3 (v). Seats were placed in the nave and aisles before the end of the 16th century. When they were first installed, charges were made for their use as a means of raising money for the church, which was common practice in churches. The ensuing reservation of places sometimes led to squabbles. A vestry resolution in 1786 decided that the churchwardens *'should pursue every legal method at the expense of the parish to prevent the wife of Thomas Cutler from again interrupting the persons whom they have appointed to sit in the seat from which they lately removed her'*. In 1820 a subscription was raised to provide enough seating for the whole congregation, and pews were soon installed in the north and south aisles and at the west entrance, and a gallery built at the rear end of the nave around 1836. There were 1190 seats in 1842, many of them in this gallery. The gallery was removed around 1913, leaving about 450 seats. Removal of some rear pews to provide amenity areas was carried out in the year 2000, reducing seating further.

Various floor and wall **tablets** to prominent local families are found throughout the church, although there are no monuments of any note. An earlier belief that Lionel Duke of Clarence (died 1368) was buried in the chancel is erroneous. He was buried at the Priory. The floors are of modern tiling, and set in these are several old marble slabs with casements of lost brasses.

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### THE NORTH PORCH

This was built a little later than the south porch, perhaps about 1400, and is shorter, with wood where that has stone vaulting. There is a central exterior **niche** which must have once held an image. A traceried **window** remains on the west side, but the other is now broken away. The encroachment of the aisle on the porch is less evident here than is the case in the south porch, but presumably the unsymmetrical siting of the window implies this foreshortening. There are **stone seats** beneath the windows, and one disfigured stone **image** above the centre of the doorway into the church, but no ranges of heads as found in the south porch. Its door is similar to that of the south porch.

### THE NORTH AISLE

The north aisle is dedicated to St John the Evangelist. The finely carved **door** to the north porch is similar to that to the south porch. A **wall brass** near the door is to Prince Leopold, Duke of Albany and Earl of Clarence. This is the only time the title Earl of Clarence, a title which derives from Clare, has been used. Leopold was the fourth son of Queen Victoria, and was a former Grand Master of the local freemasons.

The **Royal Arms** hang nearby. Although these had been displayed previously in some churches, they became more general when Henry VIII assumed headship of the Church in England. Mary, as a Catholic, ordered their removal, Elizabeth their replacement, and the Commonwealth their removal again. In 1660 after the restoration of the monarchy they were made compulsory, and were generally found in churches until Queen Victoria's accession in 1837. The ruler at the time of installation can often be identified from the form of the arms. Clare's royal arms have the arms of England & Scotland, France and Ireland in the first three quarters. The fourth quarter has the German states of Brunswick, Luneburg and Hanover/Westphalia, while the golden crown of Charlemagne is in a central shield. This collection indicates one of the early Hanoverian kings, George I, II, or III, prior to the Act of Union with Ireland in 1801 which followed the Irish rebellion of 1798, at which time the arms of France were removed, giving way to those of Scotland.

The **stained glass window** in this aisle is a 1914-1918 war memorial, for which King George V headed the subscription list. Flags and a remembrance roll are fixed to the wall nearby. At the top are **heraldic arms**, from left to right:- the Duchy of Lancaster; the Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich; East Anglia; the Haberdashers' Company; Clare; and the Royal Arms.

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Below these God is pictured wearing a papal tiara - a method of expressing his sovereignty which was favoured in the 15th century. He is giving a blessing in the Latin form, with thumb extended (in contrast to the Greek form, which has a thumb crossed over the palm of the hand). He holds an orb with a cross, symbol of Christ as ruler of the world, and is surrounded by cherubim. A dove representing the Holy Spirit is below.

An angel kneeling in worship surmounts the main scene, which is entitled 'The Fountain of Life' and shows blood from the five wounds of Christ flowing into an open tomb, by which Mary Magdalene kneels. The tomb is not of the cave type associated with the Biblical story, but of later style, such as was used in the north aisle of churches for sacred dramatisations of the Resurrection, and later copied in windows depicting that scene. It bears letters looking like IHC, the first letters of the Greek word for Jesus. IHS, which is also sometimes seen, is variously said to be an alternative Greek form or a Latin symbol, and stands for 'Jesus, Saviour of Men'. Nearby is a chalice or reliquary, and the flowers could be taken as the promise of new life. One angel's eyes are covered to blot out the sad sight.

The cross is drawn as a tree, with St John and St Mary on its roots. Nesting on it is an example of the pelican in her piety. This depicts a legend of the bird feeding her young with her own blood, and is a traditional symbol of Christ's death for mankind. The starting-point for the idea which was developed in the legend may have been the pelican's red-tipped beak held near its breast, or the belief that she drew blood when picking out her feathers to form a nest.

The sun and moon appear at the sides of the cross. These sometimes indicate that the whole of creation is subject to Christ, but sometimes the sun depicts the New Testament and the moon the Old, resting in its shadow. At the side stand Saints Michael (see Revelation 12: 7-9) and George, both slayers of dragons, fighters against evil and patron saints of soldiers. Below is a roundel (round window) showing some of the traditional 'Instruments of the Passion' (these are listed in the quotation below). The main Latin inscription at the base translates *'In honour of the most precious blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, this memorial to those who offered their lives for their country'*.

Sir William St John Hope, the antiquarian who lived in Clare at the time, says: *'The subject of the window is the mystical Fountain of Life. Our blessed Lord is crucified between Saints Mary and John, but the foot of the cross instead of being fixed on the rock of Calvary is plunged in a fountain*

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*filled with the precious Blood flowing from the Sacred Wounds. At the top of the Cross is the symbolical "Pelican in her piety" feeding her young with blood from her own breast. In the head of the window the Ancient of Days is represented with the Holy Dove in a glory of Cherubim. In front of the fountain kneels St Mary Magdalene as a type of sinners.*

*"Come all ye whom sins accursed  
Taint with stain of deepest dye;  
In the bath of life immersed  
All are cleansed eternally."*

*In a wreath below, a shield bears the instruments of the Passion "Salvatoris mundi arma" - the Cross, ladder, sponge, spear, nails, and crown of thorns. In the outer lights are St Michael, his foot upon the serpent who is crawling off scotched but not killed, and St George, victorious but weary after fight with evil.'*

At the east end of the north aisle, alongside the chancel, is a **chapel dedicated to St Mary** often known as the **LADY CHAPEL**. A **window** formerly here pictured the Assumption of Mary (her ascension to Heaven). There is a piscina (a stone basin in a niche, for washing vessels used in the eucharist) and, on the floor, part of a **sarcophagus** or coped sepulchral slab with a boldly worked cross on top, possibly 13th century.

The **cover** used on this chapel's altar depicts the early Christian fish symbol: in the corners are the Greek words for Jesus, Christ, Son of God, Saviour. In that sentence, which sums up Christian belief, the initial letters of each word,  $\iota \chi \theta \upsilon \varsigma$  put together form the Greek word for 'fish', a picture of which also appears on the altar cover.

The small **carpet** was worked by the late Mrs Swithinbank, wife of a former vicar. Its design includes several motifs appropriate to the church: the crosses crosslet with the diagonal cross behind, the combined keys of St Peter and sword of St Paul, the ChiRho symbol (first two letters of the Greek word 'Christ'), an elaborate star, and a simplified version of the monogram surmounted by a crown as in the carving at the top of the chantry chapel. Marble slabs in the floor commemorate the Brise family beginning with Joshua Brise, who settled in Clare in 1715.

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**THE CROSSING** (the intersection of the nave and the chancel)

In front of the chancel and covered by the carpet, is a **large grave slab**. It has a partly defaced inscription 'HIC JACET MAGISTER .....US DE GODAWYK QUONDAM PRIOR PROVINCIALIS ORDINIS NOSTRI CUIUS ANIMA PROPITETUR DEUS. AMEN.' ('Here lies master [...]us de Godewyk, sometime Provincial prior of our order, on whose soul may God have mercy. Amen.'). A friar named Robert was provincial (head) of the Augustinian friars (also known as the Austins) in 1450. All that remains of the Christian name on the inscription are the final two letters of a word '...US' which could well be the end of 'Robertus', tending to confirm this as relating to Robert de Godewyk. By its size it would seem that the slab had originally lain before an altar. It is assumed that it was brought to the parish church from Clare Priory, although the reason for doing so is not apparent. Certainly after the Dissolution useful stones were often taken and re-used elsewhere, but in this position, leading up to the chancel, perhaps a better guess is that he was a well-loved local figure whose memory was cherished. But this must remain a guess.

The **pulpit** is modern. Although the sermon now has a place in many services, during the reigns of Edward VI and Elizabeth only one fifth of the clergy were licensed to preach. This was because the doctrine of many clergy was suspect and also 'wrong' politics could be brought into sermons. As the influence of the Reformation grew, more emphasis was given to preaching, and so to the prominence of the pulpit, sometimes even at the cost of the altar. As is traditional, the pulpit is surmounted by a **small crucifix**. The crucifix in this position replaced the rood - which had been removed from most churches - and stands at the chancel entrance, the place of conversion, of entry to eternal life. In contrast the cross on altars is usually an empty one or one of Christ-in-glory, a crucified Jesus crowned as king.

The brass **eagle lectern** is of the early 16th century (some say 15th century) and an excellent example of such reading desks. It is made of latten (a brass alloy) and is of the money box type, with an open beak to receive coins which now emerge from a slot in the tail, the door being missing. There are indications that there used to be a collecting box underneath. The base of the lectern is formed with three collared dogs. It has been stated to be Flemish and a gift from Queen Elizabeth I, but there is no confirmation of either of these claims. The eagle is sometimes seen as a symbol of St John's gospel, reckoned as the most spiritual one, the nearest to the sun (standing for God). The eagle soars to the greatest height, can gaze undazzled at the sun, and



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with its powerful flight can carry the Gospel over all the earth, represented by the orb on which the figure stands.

### THE FORMER ROOD LOFT AND CHANCEL SCREEN

The **door** in the pillar by the pulpit and another in the opposite pillar lead to stone staircases rising to the former rood loft, giving access to the **rood** (an old word for 'cross') and on to the roof, where they emerge in the distinctive '**pepperpots**' seen from outside. In some churches musicians sometimes played from such a loft, but often rood doors and stairways would allow entry by only the smallest of musicians and instruments. The main purpose of lofts was probably to give access for servicing the rood - covering it during Lent and carrying out other necessary operations. The position of the upper doors indicates that the rood loft at Clare was exceptionally high, nearly eight metres above the floor and set in the high chancel arch. The large crucifixion scene with St John and St Mary in attendance which rose from the rood beam would have been one of the most impressive features of the church - naves were sometimes made high for just this purpose. Often rood figures were portable so they could be taken down and used in processions. Above the screen the space in the arch would have been filled with a huge sheet of wood and the area painted with a 'Doom' (a picture of the Last Judgement) or The harrowing of Hell (Jesus leading out from the jaws of Hades those he had redeemed from those nether regions). In 1465 a widow, Agnes Hukton, left £10 in her will '*for the making of the rood loft*'. Another will, of 1473, included 10 marks for the fabric of the loft '*de novo faciend*'. In his will of 1478 John Harold, local clothier and father-in-law of Thomas Paycocke of Coggeshall, left money to complete the new rood loft which was being erected by Goche of Sudbury. These wills suggest that during these years a new rood screen of large proportions was being built in place of an earlier one. A later bequest was for painting and gilding the '*candilbeme before the roode*', a beam on which candles were placed as footlights for the rood. These dates coincide with the time of construction of the chancel which preceded the present one (which was built in 1617).

Sometimes a **screen** reached just between two pillars, but in the case of Clare it was continued to the south, and **parts of this 15th century feature** can still be seen in their original positions in two places near the organ. One of these remnants was later used to form the east end of the chantry chapel or parclose screen when this was erected in its present position. A **remnant of an arch** over an earlier doorway can be seen at the top left of the present opening towards the organ. Rood screens were mostly torn down under Edward VI. In 1561 Elizabeth decreed that as long as the 'images' (Jesus

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and the others) were removed, the screens should remain, but unfortunately this was too late for Clare. Replacement partitions were then allowed, but had to be surmounted with a suitable crest such as the Royal Arms.

### **THE CHANCEL** (the area with the choir stalls and sanctuary)

In earlier years this part of a church was regarded as the priest's, it being the successor to the first covering of an altar provided by the priest during the original preaching, which was by a cross set up in the open air. Clare's chancel was substantially re-built in 1617 after it had fallen into ruin. This 17th century work very carefully copied the 15th century work of the rest of the building, and older window tracery was altered and re-used in places.

The **chancel arches and string courses** with heads and angels are similar to those in the nave.

The **choir stalls** date from the rebuilding of 1617. They formerly included return stalls (seats at right angles to the rest) but these have now been brought in line with the others. They contain some fine tracery woodwork which perhaps re-used older material, possibly 15th century woodwork from the old rood screen. A ledge on the north side bears graffiti carved by 18th century choirboys.

### **THE ORGAN**

The position of an organ, even though it is on the ground, is still called 'the organ loft', recalling the time when musicians played their instruments from a loft above the congregation. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century an organ had stood at the other end of the church. It was removed to the present end in 1864. In 1888 an organ which had been brought from St John's church, Fitzroy Street, London, was installed, the total cost being £351. By 1977 a new organ was urgently required, and the present one was obtained from St Peter's Church, Ipswich, a redundant church. It was stored in a cow shed at Chilton Street for a time before its installation and re-building as a memorial to Clare Wayman (1892-1976) by the Wayman family whose gift of £4000 nearly covered the total cost.

**THE EAST WINDOW** re-used older window tracery, smoothing its pointed arch into an even curve. Below a cracked **sun and moon** appear **coats of arms** including some of the benefactors at the time of the rebuilding of this end of the church in 1617. Names in the upper row which can be distinguished are Sir George Le Hunt, Sir John Higham, Sir Thomas Barnardiston, Sir Steven Somes and Sir William Clopton, but the only name left in the lower row is that of the Honourable Company of Haberdashers.

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The narrow columns of coloured glass adjacent to these may be from other arms or from different pictures formerly in the window. As the morning sun shines through the coats of arms they present a pleasing display despite some fragmentation and re-assembly. Presumably they suffered in one of the attacks on church furnishings, although it is difficult to see why they should have been thought offensive. Much interesting detail appears in the arms including a man with callipers and the bittern from the Barnardiston arms. Was William Langland, who died in 1400, being cynical when he said in *Piers Plowman* that to give a picture in a window and put one's name or portrait there helped a donor to get to Heaven?

*Wouldst thou glaze the gable, and 'grave therein thy name*

*Secure should thy soul be for to dwell in Heaven.'*

The fragments of early coloured glass scattered around the window give hints both of the former splendour of this window and also of the damage done by the Puritans during the visit to the church in 1643 of William Dowsing, *'Parliamentary visitor for demolishing the superstitious pictures and ornaments of churches'*. (For information on this visit see Section 2). Extensive repairs to the window were carried out in the early 2000s, during which it was found that it contained 2667 pieces of glass, including some dating from the 14<sup>th</sup> to the 17<sup>th</sup> century and others from Victorian times, presumably from a repair then. Some pieces were only two square centimetres in size. The work was carried out by Messrs Delvin Plummers, near Norwich.

The original use of the ten wooden shields in the roof of the chancel is unknown. Such shields sometimes held wooden angels, and sometimes paintings of coats of arms or the Instruments of the Passion, but a close inspection of these shields during repairs in 2002 gave no clue to what may have been there.

**THE SANCTUARY.** The communion or **altar rail** with its twisted balusters is of the same date as the chancel's rebuilding, probably around 1617 (although some writers of guides give other dates for the rails). Altar rails were brought in at the time of the Reformation to protect the altar when rood screens were removed and communicants no longer excluded from this area. They also served to foil Puritan efforts to move altars into the body of the church - and even to keep dogs away, the balusters being set close enough together to achieve this purpose. Even such rails were thought to reflect 'papal superstitions', and their removal was ordered in 1643 (perhaps not in time for Dowsing's visit?) but they were permitted again in 1660. One

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of the beautifully **carved chairs** in the sanctuary bears the date 1569 and the Clare chevrons. The **door to the vestry** is finely carved.

Ancient wills indicate that the high **altar** was dedicated to St Peter, and a reference in 1643 shows that the chancel used to contain *'the image with the tabernacle of St Peter'*, for the painting of which one inhabitant left twenty shillings in 1506. Cautley's 'Suffolk churches', written in 1937, spoke of 'the holy table' of that time as being late Stuart. The 1982 supplement to this book speaks of a new altar table provided around 1883. The altar was enlarged in 1946 and the feet of its new **riddel posts** (the posts carrying the curtains) bear names of servicemen who died in the second world war. These posts were made by the Wareham Guild, and the wrought ironwork was designed by the Reverend F.S.Swithinbank, vicar at the time.

**Candlesticks** on either side of the altar were given by Canon Vatcher, their design including the letter P repeated, for Saints Peter and Paul. The **piscina** is a plain one.

Although three **altar steps** often symbolise the three-fold blessing ('In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost') those at Clare are more of an accident, constructed to raise the level of the sanctuary.

A **floor slab memorial** very near the altar is to John Poulter, a one-time occupier of the Priory whose name is prominent in the church records. He was a forceful character who used his influence as a lawyer to have his finger in every pie. Gladys Thornton (author of 'A History of Clare, Suffolk', 1928) tells how Thomas Walford, an antiquarian writing at the end of the 18th century, claims that to serve his own interests Poulter destroyed the local industry of say-making (a form of drapery) by any means including threats and persuasion and preventing the entry of new apprentices. Walford went on *'He was held in such terror by every inhabitant that whatsoever he proposed they dare not but acquiesce in, knowing if he was opposed there was no injury he would not inflict to gratify his authority. Right and wrong were to him synonymous terms.'* Walford had a personal grudge against Poulter which may have coloured his account, but it is a fact that the lawyer was ultimately struck from the Rolls for issuing false writs, changing names, dates and so on - after first having to go on his knees begging pardon from the Commissioners. Nonetheless he managed to finish up by getting himself buried very near the high altar!

The **chapel to the north (left) of the chancel**, the Lady chapel dedicated to St Mary, was mentioned earlier when describing the north aisle.

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**THERE WAS ALSO A CHAPEL TO THE SOUTH OF THE CHANCEL**, making a second chapel on this south side, formerly known as **St Katharine's chapel**. It is now separated from the rest of the south aisle by the organ, and is used as the choir robing room. It has a **squint** to the high altar, presumably so that an acolyte could help the priest officiating at a minor altar to correspond with the celebration at the high altar (although there are now no signs of a piscina). The iron **hinges of the priest's door** which opens into this area from the exterior have unusual carvings. **Heads of royalty** or other nobility appear at the end of **timber beams** in the roof each side of the organ.

A 15th century will indicates that the church also had an altar dedicated to a St Nicholas, possibly in the position of the present organ. This and the altar dedicated to St Katharine may provide links with the Austin friars, as described in Section 3(i). There was also an image of St Dorothy somewhere in the church.

### **OTHER FEATURES**

**THERE IS A PEAL OF EIGHT BELLS**, the heaviest in Suffolk. In 1553 there were five bells (and also the sanctus bell) but only one of this original group remains. This one was cast in 1400 and has a Latin inscription '*May the Holy Trinity preserve this bell*' and now forms the seventh bell of the peal. The sixth bell dates from 1579, and is the only undisputed work of John Dyer, who was an itinerant founder. In 1781 Mears cast two further bells to make the octave. The present third and fifth bells are the work of the Gray family of Colchester. The tenor, weighing 1400 kilograms (28 cwt) was recast by Charles Newman of Norwich in 1893, and the fourth was recast in London by William Mears. There used to be **an inn on the north-west corner of the graveyard called 'The Six Bells'** and this recalls the time before the bells were brought up to eight. In former days **inns** often had an association with churches, sometimes to facilitate the requirement to offer hospitality and sometimes to brew ale in connection with revelry on feast days. The inn was converted into three houses and in 1851 the church bought these houses for £380 so that they could be demolished to extend the churchyard.

In the late 18th and early 19th centuries the bells were regularly rung to mark special occasions including Hock Tuesday, the second Tuesday after Easter Day. On the Monday the women seized and bound men, demanding a small payment for their release, and on the Tuesday the men waylaid the women. Public roads were blocked with ropes, and passengers were pulled

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from coaches so that money could be exacted from them, all proceeds going to pious use. This Hock Tuesday celebration seems to have been of particular importance in Clare, though the reason is not known. Various anniversaries were also marked by bell ringing, including those of the monarch's birthday and accession, and the restoration of the monarchy in 1660. During the 17<sup>th</sup> century a Chilton bricklayer, John Hills, left two shillings yearly to be bestowed by the churchwardens for ringers *'to ring upon the fifth day of November in perpetual memory of that famous deliverance'* - from the Gunpowder Plot. The sum was increased in 1676 when the chief inhabitants agreed in their vestry meeting that the ringers should have five shillings for ringing *'every powdier treason'*. On others of these anniversary ringings the ringers received a guinea between them, which was more than a working man could earn in two weeks. The fee was raised to two guineas to mark Nelson's victory at the battle of the Nile, which was marked by a special peal. Presumably in addition to calling people to worship Clare's bells shared as appropriate some of the purposes church bells in general have served over the centuries - warning of danger, calling to arms, driving away witches and hailstorms, and telling the town the age or marital status of people being buried by means of the number of times the bell was tolled.

Because of the strain put on the fabric by the weight and movement of the bells **the interior of the tower** had to be rebuilt from a height of ten feet upwards in 1899. The old rubble and flint were removed and replaced by Portland cement. 43,000 of the hardest Staffordshire blue bricks were used, the cost being £1166.

Notices in the room under the tower tell of special peals which have been rung. Other boards there give interesting information about ways money was formerly raised to help the poor.

**THE CHURCH CLOCK** was electrified in 1989. Prior to that it had been faithfully wound by hand every day since it was installed. At one time the work was done in lieu of the £5 rent for a little shop (a jewellers at the time) at the north end of the market, a shop owned by the church. For another twenty-five years a Clare family carried out this task unpaid. The chimes are said to be the Cambridge Chimes to the words

*'All through this hour  
Be God my guide  
That by His power  
No step may slide'.*

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**THE SUNDIAL** in the gable of the south porch has the inscription 'Go about your business' and bears the date 1790. It cost £3.6s.8d. Perhaps it is saying 'You have worshipped God in this place; now get on with your duties in the world', but another suggestion is that it may relate to business activities carried out in the porch.

**FLOODLIGHTING** of the church was installed in 1991.

**CHURCH PLATE.** Pevsner describes the older church plate as:- richly embossed silver-gilt cup, probably Flemish; Cup, 1562; Paten, 1680; Flagon, 1713. Another writer says that the first cup was reputed to have been taken from the Spanish Armada and presented to the church by Queen Elizabeth, but a document of 1777 states it was given by a Captain Joseph Laws, RN.

### 2) THE VISIT OF WILLIAM DOWSING AND HIS DESTRUCTION OF 'IMAGES'

Today if we speak of vandals in connection with churches we are likely to think of people who do mindless damage, and the sad fact that many lovely churches have to remain locked. When visitors enter Clare church they pass between two angels who have had their heads knocked off. We do not know who was responsible for this, but a reasonable guess is that it was done by groups who caused much damage to churches in earlier centuries.

In the 17th century a strongly Puritan parliament decreed the demolition of altars, removal of candlesticks, and defacement of pictures and images. William Dowsing, a fanatical champion of the anti-Romanist policy, was appointed as '*Parliamentary Visitor for the East Anglian counties for demolishing the superstitious pictures and ornaments of churches*'.

The date usually quoted for his visit to Clare is January 6th 1643 whereas his commission to do the job is dated December 19th 1643, apparently 11 months after! The seeming discrepancy is due to the change of calendar from the Julian to the Gregorian. This change happened at different times in different places in Europe from 1582 onwards, travellers changing from one date to another as they moved between countries, like changing currency, or according to whether one was 'papist' or Protestant. For a time two dates were given for the period between January and March, so Dowsing's visit would have been January 1644 by the new dating.

Dowsing kept a journal in which he says of his visit to Clare:- '*We brake down 1000 pictures superstitious; 1 brake down 200; 3 of God the Father,*

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*and 3 of Christ, and the Holy Lamb, and 3 of the Holy Ghost like a Dove with Wings; and the 12 Apostles were carved in wood, on the top of the Roof (presumably inside), which we gave order to take down; and 20 Cherubim to be taken down; and the Sun and Moon in the East window, by the King's Arms to be taken down.'*

These 'pictures' were presumably stained glass windows, wall paintings and carvings. Bullet holes have been found in the roof indicating one means of destruction, and doubtless arrows, stone-throwing and the whitewash brush were others. The church's lack of brasses and many monuments today is probably partly due to the plundering and damage done in such attacks.

The total number of pictures Dowsing claims to have destroyed (more than in any other single church he mentions) seems incredibly large, even if each time a composite picture was destroyed he counted all the figures in it separately. His journal reveals that his party tackled five other churches including Haverhill the same day, so they certainly must have 'got cracking'! Given the shortness of a January day, say seven hours of daylight, and the time needed for mounting horses and travelling, he can only have spent about an hour at Clare. Despite commands to destroy them, some specific features he names still remain, so perhaps he gave his orders and galloped off to the next church, leaving men behind who did not carry out all the destruction he had ordered. Also, complete destruction was not deemed necessary: if an image's eyes were gouged and face scratched it was thought sufficient to destroy its influence.

How was the appearance of the church changed by his visit and similar visits by others? The sun and moon, whose destruction Dowsing had ordered, still look down at us, though with cracked faces. One claim is they had been retrieved afterwards and restored. Fragments of coloured glass scattered around windows, especially the east one, are presumably relics of earlier pictures. There are twenty stone angels in the stringcourse of the church, so perhaps these were the 'cherubim' he mentioned, but which escaped their planned fate. The fourteen wooden wall-pieces (vertical timbers high in the nave roof), might once have held the twelve apostles he said he destroyed, but there are two to spare, so .....

Old records such as wills give information about a number of features now lost. There was an image of St Peter in the chancel, for one local inhabitant left twenty shillings in his will for it to be painted: images of the appropriate saint were usually in niches or on corbels near the altar. An altar dedicated to St Katherine stood in the south chapel east of the organ (the present choir



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robing room) and an image of her is mentioned. A 15<sup>th</sup> century will indicates there was an altar dedicated to St Nicholas, probably near the present position of the organ, doubtless also with images. An image of St Dorothy was somewhere in the church. One former window picture which is known to have existed was in the Lady chapel north of the chancel. It told the story of Mary's ascension to Heaven, and there would also have been an altar and images there. The chapel by the south porch, now screened by the gallery-pew, would have had its altar and images. And, of course, there was the rood loft and beam, described in Section one under the heading 'The Former Rood Loft and Chancel Screen'. One disfigured image remains in the north porch, and a niche there doubtless once held another.

One of the Lansdowne Manuscripts at the British Museum gives a list of some of the heraldic figures and devices at one time in the windows of Clare church. These include the families of Oxford with Mortimer (who inherited the Clare estates after 1314), Clare, Lacy, 'Wokendon with Myld', and Green, and a Latin inscription which may be translated '*Pray for the souls of Thomas Green, Knight, and of his wife Joan, of John Montgomery, Knight, of the Lady Elizabeth Say and the Lady Joan Dedham, who had this window glazed in the year of our Lord 1489*'. One brass in the church was to Thomas Horold whose daughter Margaret married Thomas Paycocke of Coggeshall. The last-named left £5 in his will of 1518 for the brass, which was to include '*his pycture and his wife and childryn theron*'. Another feature was one mentioned by Dowsing, for he speaks of the King's Arms being in the vicinity of the sun and moon.

With imagination one can begin to build up a picture of the church in earlier years. This can be helped by visiting churches where former features still exist or an attempt has been made to re-present the past. Brent Eleigh has its unique 13/14th century wall-painted reredos. Little Braxted in Essex has its large collection of wall-paintings, even though only from the 19th century. Theberton has coloured its pillars and arches to show the hues which used to surround worshippers. Eye and Blythburgh have painted some angels in their roofs in the way all such angels were coloured in earlier years. Ufford provides an example of the way shields in the roof similar to those still in Clare chancel could sometimes colourfully present the Instruments of the Passion. Copford near Colchester has a superb collection. Pickering in Yorkshire has vast areas of its walls covered with paintings. Occasionally one encounters a church with an original or well-restored rood loft, or at least rood beam, and the rood with its crucifixion scene still to be seen. York Minster and various cathedrals fortunately retain many pictures in glass.

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And if we travel abroad we can still marvel at baroque churches of Bavaria with their orchestral-like blending together of paintings, sculptures, and symbolical colouring to give a unified presentation of their message; or Chartres cathedral with its thousands of representations in stone and glass of Biblical and other Christian scenes. With such pictures in mind, one can sit in the church and attempt to re-furnish it with the colour and glory of the past.

But Dowsing cannot be blamed for all the destruction at Clare. There is a reference in the churchwardens' accounts to damage done by Commonwealth men. The Commonwealth did not come into existence until 1649, six years after Dowsing's visit, so this reference presumably indicates a later raid. Speaking of churches in general, there were many attacks on 'sacred objects' before and after Dowsing's time. His visit was but one in a centuries long process. The original version of this book included a lengthy consideration of this. It is enough to say now that things switched to and fro between rulers such as Edward VI, Mary and Elizabeth, or the Commonwealth.

Another cause of destruction was through widespread general deterioration in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, followed by a throwing out of 'clutter' and whitewashing of walls etc in the 19<sup>th</sup>.

There were varying reasons for vandalism and other destruction in churches, but the sincerity of at least some of the breakers of images should be acknowledged. Even if one thinks of their actions as mistaken, they sometimes genuinely felt they were attacking idolatry in the name of true spirituality. But appreciation of the motives of some iconoclasts need not deny that images can be means of grace, like the sacraments themselves conveying something of God to men. Man's spiritual side can be awakened in different ways. Some people are most helped by pictures or other images. Others find their way in the plainness of the Quaker meeting house. For some the majesty of ritual and the odour of incense. For others the centrality of the spoken word, represented in the past by the central pulpit. For some the beauty of soaring music. For others, guitars and electronic instruments, a rhythm for dancing or hand clapping. All can be means to true worship of the one living God. (Are these last thoughts more appropriate to a sermon? Surely a study of a church and its furnishings must make some mention of what they stand for - what it is really all about!)

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### 3) MISCELLANEOUS FACTS AND STORIES

#### i) CONNECTIONS WITH CLARE PRIORY.

REFERENCES TO SOME CONNECTIONS have been made at different points in the preceding text, including the pew gallery and 'Priory chapel' near the church's south door, and the sepulchral slab in front of the chancel which is probably that of an Augustinian Provincial.

#### A FURTHER POSSIBLE LINK IS THROUGH THE NAMES OF SAINTS.

As stated in the previous section, the present choir robing room east of the organ was formerly known as **St Katharine's** Chapel with an altar dedicated to this saint: also, there was an altar dedicated to a **St Nicholas**, possibly near the position of the present organ. These altars may provide links with Clare Priory, because among the several saints bearing each of these two names there was one who had connections with the Augustinians and the canonisation of both of them coincides with a significant stage of the parish church's history.

Katherine of Siena's letters reveal her as a fiery church politician. She helped bring the papacy back to Rome from Avignon, and reconciled warring factions in the church. Pope Urban VI often consulted her for advice. She was a woman of great personal faith and holiness, a mystic who was also a very practical worker, doing indefatigable work among the sick and poor especially during the time of the Black Death. She had a passionate concern for the salvation of all mankind, and died aged thirty-three. She had contacts with Clare, for among her disciples was a William Flete, very probably the Augustinian friar of that name who came from Clare. She also corresponded with Sir John Hawkwood, a soldier from this locality. She died in 1380 and was canonised in 1461.

Nicholas of Tolentino was an Augustinian friar who was a great pastor and a very effective preacher who had many miracles attributed to him. He is portrayed in a window in the priory church. He died in 1305 and was canonised in 1446. Both canonisations came just before the time of intensive alterations to the parish church, which was from 1460 onwards. It therefore seems reasonable to guess that these characters were the ones whose names were commemorated by those altars, thus providing a possible link between the parish church and the priory.

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### RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN THE PARISH CHURCH AND THE PRIORY - THEN AND NOW.

The varying relationship between the priory and the parish church in the earlier centuries can probably be summed up by saying that where their areas overlapped, the two parties often worked together happily, but nevertheless clashes sometimes arose. The present situation is a happy one, the churches sharing united services and working together in many other ways. For the writer of these notes, this was vividly expressed some years ago. A eucharist at the parish church in which the town's two nonconformist churches were sharing was in progress. Suddenly the church door opened and the prior led the congregation of the Catholic church in to join the service – something which would have been unthinkable a few generations ago.

### ii) LESSER KNOWN SAINTS ASSOCIATED WITH FORMER ALTARS IN THE CHURCH

Saints Nicholas and Katharine were mentioned in the last note, where their stories were told. Mention was made in Section 2 of a former image in the church to Saint Dorothy. It is related of her that she was threatened with death if she did not renounce her faith and marry a Roman official. She replied *'Do to me what torment thou wilt, for I am ready to suffer it for the love of my spouse, Jesus Christ, in whose garden full of delights I have gathered roses, spices and apples'*. It is said that as she approached her execution in 303 AD a lawyer mockingly asked her to send him flowers and fruits from the heavenly garden. Miraculously a child appeared with a basket of apples and roses, which she sent to the lawyer. (An alternative version says it was an angel who brought the basket, after Dorothy's death). The lawyer became a Christian at once, and was himself then martyred.

### iii) INVOLVEMENT IN TOWN AFFAIRS

In former centuries the church vestry was responsible for, or at least shared control over, much of the town's miscellaneous business as well as purely religious duties. During the 17th century vestry meetings were held at different inns, and there is one reference to the Market House chamber as the venue.

The vestry book for the years 1595-1784 reveals the vestry's responsibility for supervising the common lands, for ensuring the working of the poor law, and for general care of the morals of the people and condition of the town. These officials not only collected rents for use of the common lands, but also supervised the bailiff's work of maintaining fences, spreading out dung

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and molehills, and impounding stray cattle. Administering the poor law included making sure the town carried out its duties regarding the support of vagrants and poor children - there was a case in 1644 when the Clare overseers were accused of encouraging a poor boy to wander away to save the expense of maintaining him. Placing pauper children with masters in Clare was another duty, but the most important item in this area was probably the supervision of the House of Correction, a workhouse where the major work of inmates was spinning yarn. There was supervision of those repairing the highway and bridges, requiring vigilance against the mispending of money. In the 18th century it was the vestry which saw to the upkeep of a fire-engine, paid a small sum for every fox which was caught, and shared oversight of the town crier who walked the streets forbidding fireworks, bathing in the river and other misdemeanours.

### iv) SAMPLE EXTRACTS FROM THE CHURCH RECORDS:

1799. *Paid Isaac Flanders 6d for trying to prevent the boys breaking the church windows.*

1823. *Searching the grave of Joesph the son of John Goodall the cooper by order of the vicar, on a rumour that the body had been clandestinely removed - but which rumour was found incorrect: 4s.3d.*

1838. *Paid to Samuel Bowyer (of the Chilton Street White Hart) bill of refreshment for perambulating the parish, £2.7s.8d. Expenses at Bell Inn on return, £2.9s.0d.*

A record dated 1793 says of the churchwarden: *He will sweep the church once a week for £3 a year, he will wash the linen for £1.1s.0d. he will wind the clock for £2, he will wash the church once a year for 15/-, he will cut the walks once a year for 6/-, he will clear the leads on the roof through the year for 18/-.* His salary will be £4, giving him a total of £12 p.a.

### v) THE STORY OF SOME PEOPLE WHO WOULDN'T PAY THEIR DUES

In writing about the nave in Section 1, mention was made of the case of some men who complained about seating. Details may be of interest. The churchwardens sued certain men from the nearby hamlet of Chilton for not paying their church dues. The case came before the Court of Arches in 1594, and was dealt with by a commission formed from the clergy of neighbouring churches to hear the evidence. For their part the Chilton men referred to the church in critical terms, saying that it was without adequate seating. Nearly all the witnesses were old men who could remember happenings *'in the tyme*

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*of Popery*'. A weaver, John Norman, aged eighty years, said that long ago John Sewitte, clerk and organ-player in the church, used to carry holy water to Chilton inhabitants, who paid him for his pains; Norman *'was then John Sewyttes scholler'*. Another witness, a blacksmith aged sixty-nine, was then *'a singing boy in the choir'* and he gave evidence that Chilton men had given money towards the bells of Clare church. Thomas Chapman, aged eighty and for long the church clerk, and John Cobbe, eighty-three, for long the sexton, both weavers, gave their evidence in the same way. They and others described the time when men *'had not seats in the church but walked up and downe in the churche in the tyme of service'*, and when there was *'a bason painted aboute the churche, and the devocon of everie parishner was collected towards the reparacon'*.

Throughout the evidence showed that the Chilton inhabitants took part in the church activities save only that they *'doe not ioyn in courte and leete with the men of Clare, but they meete all at there moote hall upon one daye, and Clare men be called by themselves, and Stoke and Chilton men are called together'*.

Finally, in the testimony of John Puttowe, aged seventy years, it is said that the men of Chilton *'have gone and walked in procession together with the inhabitantes of Clare, and they wente allwayes in perambulacon to Chilton streete, and there at a tree called Perryes Crosse at the ende of that streete, the vicar redde a gospell at the uttermoste parte of their boundes. And then they had there some ale or drinkinges'*.

The tree mentioned at the end of the parish bounds was probably at the crossroads to Hundon and Stoke. Seats were ultimately made by Clare men for the Chilton inhabitants, perhaps spurred on by the bequest of Richard Sheldrake, who left two shillings *'the one halfe to be employed to make formes for Chilton streat, the other to the poore mens boxe'*.

### **vi) DISHARMONY IN THE CHOIR**

An issue of the church magazine in 1993 recounted an interesting story taken from 'Correspondence relating to Clare Church Choir' giving a glimpse of something which went on behind the scenes in 1864-5:

A supplement of thirty-four hymns had been printed and many rehearsals were held. The choir improved so much with their new choirmaster that they travelled to St James' Church at Bury St Edmunds (now the cathedral) to sing at a festival, where they were much praised. But the organist, Miss Steed, refused to go.

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The choir and other church members next complained that Miss Steed played too slowly - '*you keep bad time, you omit to mark the pauses in the words and disregard the plainest directions of soft and loud*'. She was also said to '*display a spirit of indifference if not of opposition, and continues to play a prelude before the last verse of the hymn*'.

One Friday evening in November 1864 she and her father '*abused the choir for an hour*'. The churchwardens then entered the dispute on the grounds that '*she played badly and played her own hymn tunes and not those set for the Sunday*'. The choir decided they would sing without the organ, and on November 26th the vicar, the Revd. J. Coleman, decreed that until further notice the use of the organ would be suspended.

Christmas came and went. One wonders whether the carol with the phrase '*...the playing of the merry organ, sweet singing in the choir*' was included. Miss Steed resumed her place at the organ. Controversy continued into the New Year. On January 8th 1865 the choir of thirty members unanimously sent in their resignation, as did the choirmaster. The vicar now switched sides and asked Miss Steed and her father to form a new choir, because he '*had a kindly feeling towards the organist, as an old servant*'. The view of others was that the vicar '*had inability to form any opinion upon musical matters*'.

(I hasten to add that today the sweet and harmonious sound of the organ playing and choir singing softly during parish eucharist adds greatly to the sense of worship).

## APPENDIX

### A) THE GREEN MAN AND HIS RELIGIOUS SIGNIFICANCE

It may seem strange that among the first figures encountered on entering the south porch of Clare parish church are some which may be examples of the Green Man. The ten faces in the outer two ranges of the stone carvings around the door are similar to one of the typical forms of the Green Man as he appears in many churches throughout this country and the rest of Europe. Some visitors may say the vegetation on their faces also appears on other figures and is mere decoration, but others claim them with delight as Green Men.

There may also be an example at Clare Priory. At the centre of the beams in the ceiling of the Cellarer's Hall there is a figure which to some observers may seem just a decorative monster, but in some ways, especially with the

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extrusions from his mouth, he also calls to mind that mysterious figure, the Green Man.

To save being too male-orientated, it is worth mentioning that in the vaulting over the centre of the parish church doorway is part of a female face peering through what some see as hair, but which may be vegetation. This inclined a writer on the subject to believe it was probably a Green Woman. Green Men are commonplace, but a Green Woman is quite a rarity. Yet the need for a feminine counterpart to the Green Man is understandable, and the song Greensleeves may have originally had such a figure in mind. This carving at Clare is similar to one in the Minster at Ulm in Germany, which is recognized as a Green Woman. A female figure emerging from vegetation and accompanied by a child is to be found on a ceiling boss above the high altar in the Lady Chapel at Ely cathedral, but that obviously represents Mary and Jesus.

Getting back to the male of the species, Cavendish parish church certainly has a Green Man in the central boss of the vaulted ceiling of the ground floor of the tower, and a modern example appears on a wall at the start of Nethergate Street. Whether or not the figures in Clare church are Green Men, it is interesting to consider what place this character has in religious settings.

The name Green Man has been given to several different characters.

Some link him with the woodwose, a wild man with a club, possibly intended to be John the Baptist or Hercules. This figure appears on some church fonts, e.g. at Stradbroke in Suffolk, and sometimes as a supporter (a figure at the side of the shield) in heraldry. In this form perhaps he symbolised the taming of strength. But the woodwose often appears as shaggy and stupid, very different from the Green Man as usually found in churches.

On signs outside inns called The Green Man the picture is often shown as a kind of Robin Hood figure, sometimes alternatively named Jack-in-the-green or Jack-in-the-tree.

On May Day, a day associated with the return of life, a chimney sweep sometimes became a living Green Man, being decked in a wicker frame decorated with leaves and flowers and paraded around a town or village. Or a man was led through the fields as a token of aiding their fertility, and then symbolically drowned. By his death he was thought to make life-giving forces available to the village. Such rites persisted well after the time Clare parish church south porch and doorway, with their possible Green Men,



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were being built, for in 1540 Bishop Latimer was told in one town it was no good opening a church for a service because everybody was attending such ceremonies. Other accounts speak of revellers entering a church to dance their rituals there, even though a service was already in progress. Priests disapproved, but people's customs were strong and often backed by the squire, so the parson had to keep quiet. Rogation Day ceremonies, with their blessing of the fields, might be a christianisation of such activities.

However, the name Green Man is best reserved for the figure who appears in one of three distinctive forms. He may be a human face peering through vegetation, or a face eating or disgorging vegetation, or a strange mixture of human form and vegetation merging into each other – a man whose limbs taper away to become vegetation or whose hair and facial features are made of many leaves. Was he a Celtic fertility god, the beneficent spirit of vegetation, the tree spirit, still being built into churches after 1000 years of Christianity? Or is he a development from faces found in some Roman sculptures, and even centuries before that time?

Such explanations hardly account for the use of the Green Man in important and widespread Christian centres. He is on a Christian tomb of 400 AD (that of the daughter of St Hilary) at Poitiers in France: the carving at Clare Priory is similar in appearance to this example. His first entry into a cathedral was an accident. Stones plundered from a nearby pagan temple were re-used in Trier cathedral in the 6th century, and happened to contain his image. But the fact that thereafter he often appeared suggests that Christians found him a useful figure. Michaelangelo put one on a pope's tomb. In one church a virgin and child stand on a Green Man's head. In another a Green Man watches over the body of Christ in an Easter Sepulchre. He appears many times and in a wide range of forms in the vaulting bosses of the Lady Chapel at Ely Cathedral. He is found in Southwell Minster, in the cathedrals at Norwich and Exeter, the screens of St Paul's Cathedral, and King's College Chapel Cambridge - to name but a few. The famous cathedral at Chartres has forty in its magnificent west front (the royal portal) and many more in other places, and, as with others of its thousands of pictures, all are carefully co-ordinated in a well-structured programme unfolding Biblical and other Christian events. Martin Luther's books printed in his own day include the Green Man on the title page. Perhaps it is not surprising if he appears at Clare Priory and at Clare parish church which were being built and re-built at a time when wealth, sculpting ability, and architectural styles all combined to bring this figure into many buildings.

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It is inconceivable that the Green Man crept into churches as a casual pagan figure or merely a mason's whim. The Christian links are so strong and well-planned. He is often associated with creation and the natural world, with Mary and the Incarnation, and with the life of Jesus. His facial expression often fits in with the scene portrayed, e.g. a sense of expectation at the anticipated coming of Jesus, of sadness at his Passion (Exeter cathedral has a Green Man sprouting wormwood leaves, suggesting the bitterness of this scene), of joy at representations of the resurrection, ascension and the second coming.

What sort of interpretations can be given to all these appearances, in addition to the more obvious links mentioned in the last paragraphs? Several suggestions have been made.

In classical thought the Green Man has been the symbol of inspiration or of the fruits of learning, and the fact that the Renaissance brought him into many books, bibles and liturgies may reflect this association with learning.

His presentation as one who devours and disgorges vegetation may suggest the mystery of creation, death and rebirth in the world of nature, a theme which could obviously be used to illustrate Christian teaching on death and resurrection.

He may represent the bringing of the tree spirit or spirit of nature under the guidance of Christ in the way that various pagan ideas and rituals have been baptised into Christianity when attempting to lead people away from old beliefs and into the new faith.

This last thought could be carried further, possibly linking with the figure at the centre of Clare parish church porch vaulting. That figure is presumably Jesus, the wreath on his brow representing the crown of thorns. But he, too, has vegetation around his head. Is this merely decorative, as often on vault bosses? Or does Ely's virgin and child emerging from foliage offer any sort of justification for believing it may be vegetation behind the Jesus head in Clare porch, with interesting possibilities? When the writer of the book quoted below was shown these faces at Clare church he made two interesting suggestions. Christ, the Logos (the Word) has sometimes been equated with the Tree of Life in the Garden of Eden, and this could provide a link between Jesus and vegetation as appears here. Also, Christian thought claims that the act of creation was performed through the pre-existent Christ. The face of Jesus associated with foliage might be an expression of the thought of the creator spirit being revealed through created things. Pure conjecture – but an interesting thought.

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The Green Man can have special meaning today. For centuries man has exploited nature for his own benefit, as if he is the only part of creation that counts. Now we begin to realise how dependent we are upon the natural world, that we are part of the whole of creation and therefore must learn to work in co-operation with the rest of it. The Green Man, especially in that strange form which actually blends the human figure and vegetation, could be taken to symbolise the unity of mankind with the natural world, a lesson we desperately need to learn today.

*Some points above are from THE GREEN MAN by W.Anderson (Harper Collins 1990), and are gladly acknowledged.*

### **B) COATS OF ARMS AND HATCHMENTS**

There are two hatchments above the pew gallery in Clare church.

Hatchments are derived from coats of arms, examples of which appear in the great east window above the altar and at the top of the war memorial window in the north aisle.

**COATS OF ARMS** (officially called 'armorial bearings') began because a knight needed to be recognisable, particularly at tournaments and when the vizor of his helm (= helmet) was closed. He therefore wore distinctive markings on an escutcheon (= shield), on a crest on his helmet, and on a long flowing coat - his 'coat of arms'. In describing coats of arms it is necessary to sort out the left and right sides of the shield which is at its centre. What we see as the left side was the right from the knight's viewpoint, because he was behind it. It shielded the right of his body, and is called 'dexter,' the Latin word for right. The other side, our right and the knight's left, is called 'sinister'. In this note 'left' means the left side as we see it.

A coat of arms may include animals, plants, or other objects which suit the family name or contain a pun on it, so the name Swineburne might be represented by pigs, and Barker by bears. An important event in a family's history may also be depicted, e.g. after James IV of Scotland was slain, a lion pierced through the mouth was added to the Howard arms. Again, the coat may include a pictorial representation of a man's profession. So the type of crest, crown, animals etc in the coat may reveal information about a person's history and status.

If a man married a woman who already had a coat of arms, he added her arms to his, so a shield reveals which families were joined in marriage. Windows in the oratory at Clare Priory provide good examples of this, where the Barker family arms, which contain three muzzled bears' heads,

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are joined to those of a variety of different families. Similar instances can be seen in many other old houses. Generations of such additions could eventually make the pattern extremely complex, as one window at the nearby Kentwell Hall demonstrates very well.

Every coat of arms had to be different from that of everyone else living at the time, so all a man's sons had to make slight changes. On the death of the bearer, the eldest son returned to the arms his father had borne, while younger sons' arms continued to show their slight differences, although retaining the main features of the family. There are also standard symbols (a garter-like label with tabs, a star, a crescent and others) each of which indicates the relative seniority of the sons. These amended arms of all sons except the eldest then started new series of coats of arms, taken over by their own sons in due course with further slight changes. Other variations too many to describe occurred, e.g. when a woman inherited a coat because there was no son or brother, and then took it into another marriage. A family's history, as well as that of an individual, can be read from coats of arms.

**HATCHMENTS.** The word hatchment is derived from the French word for 'achievement', that display of armorial bearings which gave much information about a knight. Hatchments arrived here from the Netherlands in the second half of the 17th century, and virtually ceased some time in the 19th century. A hatchment consists of a diamond-shaped panel (the shape is officially called 'lozenge') made of wood or canvas, about 120 to 150 centimetres (four to five feet) square, stretched over a wooden frame. On this the arms are painted, in the shape of a **shield** when the deceased was a man, and a **diamond** when a woman. There may also be the **crest** or another badge in the case of a man, or perhaps **cherubs' heads** in the case of a woman. The deceased person's **motto**, such as a knight's war cry 'Stand fast', or another phrase (see later) may also appear. The surrounding spaces may be filled with other devices for decoration.

A hatchment was carried in the funeral procession, replacing the previous custom of carrying a complete set of armour of the deceased to the church. After the funeral it was displayed outside the deceased's house for the period of mourning - which might be months, or even a year. Eventually it was hung in the church with which the person had been associated, either over the tomb, or elsewhere in the church if the tomb was outside.

Although the family motto sometimes appears, hatchments often bear the word '**Resurgam**', as can be seen on one of those in this church. This is not

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a motto but a statement of Christian hope, and means 'I will rise again'. The other hatchment in the church says '**In coelo quies**' meaning 'At rest in heaven'.

### NOTES ON READING A HATCHMENT

#### **THE SHAPE OF THE ARMS SET WITHIN THE DIAMOND-SHAPED HATCHMENT DENOTES THE SEX OF THE DECEASED.**

A **shield** indicates a man. A **diamond (lozenge) shape** indicates a woman - spinster, widow, or divorced. Sometimes, however, elaboration can make less clear the diamond shape, as in the right-hand hatchment at Clare church.

#### **THE BACKGROUND IS EITHER WHOLLY BLACK, OR HALF BLACK AND HALF WHITE, AND REVEALS THE SEX AND MARITAL STATE OF THE DECEASED AND ANY SURVIVOR.**

**WHEN THE BACKGROUND IS WHOLLY BLACK** it means no spouse was left, so the person who has now died was a bachelor, spinster, widower or widow.

**If the arms against that wholly black background are undivided** it means only one family was involved, so if they are a **shield**, the deceased was a bachelor, and if a **diamond**, a spinster. A **ribbon bow** above the diamond-shaped arms is a further indication the woman was unmarried.

**If the arms against that wholly black background are divided.** it means that two families (that is, a husband's and a wife's) were involved. So when such arms are in the shape of a **shield** the person who has now died was a widower; when a **diamond**, a widow.

**WHEN THE BACKGROUND IS HALF BLACK AND HALF WHITE** it means one spouse remained alive. **The left side represents the man, the right the woman.** So if the left side is black and the right side white it means a married man has died and left a widow. If the left side is white and the right side is black it means a married woman has died, leaving her husband a widower.

**WHEN A MAN HAD MARRIED MORE THAN ONCE** the arms of his different wives could appear in a variety of ways including:- one wife's arms on each side of his own; as quarters or side by side in the woman's (i.e. the right) half; as small hatchments within his own arms, at the corners.

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### **APPLYING ALL THIS TO THE TWO HATCHMENTS ABOVE THE PEW GALLERY**

These hatchments are of the 19th century. The muzzled bear heads indicate the Barker family, who lived at Clare Priory before it was restored to the Augustinian Friars. The hatchment on the left has a shield, and the left part of the background is mainly black, while the right side remains white. This means that it is a man has died, and that he left a widow. It is, in fact, the hatchment of Lt.Col. John Barker, who died in 1804.

In the hatchment on the right the main device approximates to a diamond (although not very clearly), and has a cherub above - two indications that it is a woman who has died. The background is wholly black, showing that she did not leave a spouse. The fact that the arms are divided, with the Barker muzzled bear heads on the left, indicates that she was the widow of a Barker. The person it represents is, in fact, John Barker's widow, Caroline, who died in 1848.

### **C) THE BENEFICE OF CLARE with a list of its vicars**

For a long time the benefice had a close link with the Benedictine establishment at Stoke-by-Clare which had had its genesis at Clare castle. Vicarages were ecclesiastical livings whose original endowments were sometimes appropriated by a religious house, which thereby became the legal rector and allotted some funds to support a vicar (a substitute for the rector, as the word implies). Normally the appropriating institution received the greater tithes, and the vicar the lesser. In 1187-93 the parish of Clare was appropriated by the Benedictine monks at Stoke-by-Clare. The Bishop of Norwich decided that the vicar should have the lesser tithes, and the monks retained every other endowment, even receiving an annual pension from the vicar. The vicar was responsible for the spiritual needs of parishioners, and the appropriating establishment for the upkeep of chancels. The status of rector is now held by the clergyman based at Clare.

Some details of the benefice and its distribution in those earlier years:

In 1254, from a total of £32.13s.4d., £1 went to the Prior of Stoke-by-Clare, £5 to the Vicar, £6.13s. 4d. to the Archdeaconry of Sudbury.

In 1291, £5.6s.8d. to the Vicar and £1 to the pension of the Prior of Stoke.

In 1603, '*Tithe to be let yearly at 3 score and 10 pounds, the Bishop of Ely 50 pounds and William Weeks 20 pounds*'. The vicarage was worth £20 p.a.

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In 1831: '*1 curate, stipend £110 p.a.; a Glebe House; gross income £195 p.a.*'. The incumbent also held the rectory of Upper Chelsea, Middlesex.

In 1891 the vicarial tithes were commuted for £237 p.a., and the Great Tithes for £343.

PATRONAGE: 1603, the Crown; 1873, the Duchy of Lancaster.

QUALIFICATIONS FOR A NEW VICAR as suggested in the sixteenth century.

Sir Robert Jermyn, writing to Sir Robert Cecil in 1598-9 in order to recommend a candidate he was putting forward as a possible vicar for Clare, said '*The town is a populous market town, and requires an able, painful and discreet teacher, such as this man is*'.

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**VICARS OF CLARE, 1307-2003.** The list exhibited in the church has details from 1307:-

1307 John de Stebbyng	1591 James Resould
By 1329 Richard de Scordich	1598 William Colt, M.A.
1343 Gilbert de Karliolo	1617 Daniel Booth, M.A.
1344 John de Houghton	1617 Isaac Joyner, M.A.
1348 John Joye	1623 Robert Wilmot, M.A.
1350 Nicholas de Lydgate	1627 William Good, M.A.
1361 Thomas Porter	By 1645 Roger Cook, M.A.
1388 Richard Clerk	William Prime
1390 William Hall	1663 John Ockley, M.A.
1394 Walter Cove	1690 John Kenyon
1398 William Reed	1703 Oliver Cobb, M.A.
1404 Thomas Custen	1727 Matthew Bell, B.A.
1432 Richard Pumpy, alias Tylney	1750 John Bell, B.A.
1462 Thomas Asty	1784 William Lens
? John Motton	1785 Abraham Wallett
1467 John Knight	1791 William B. Jones, B.A.
1468 William Wellys, M.A.	1804 William Sadler, M.A.
Robert Colingham	1819 Henry Blunt, B.A.
1476 John Wyllys	1833 George Wightman, D.D.
1477 Reginald Annyson	1854 John C. Coleman
1482 Thomas Sutton, Dr	1869 Thomas Parkinson
1502 John Halyman	1871 Frederic S. Seale, B.A.
1505 Richard Turner, M.A.	1876 Joseph W. Collins
1516 John Reiston	1882 Robert Sorsbie, M.A.
John Metton	1896 Canon J.R. Vatcher, M.A.
1562 Robert Parker	1931 Francis Swithinbank B.A.
1565 Thomas Rogers	1962 Richard L.Hordern, M.A.
1566 Nicholas Whitfilde	1969 John D. Beloe, M.A.
Francis Watsonne	1974 Ralph Thicknesse, M.A.
1569 Radulph Leyver, B.A.	1977 Maurice Woodward, M.A.
1582 Robert Ballard, B.A.	1986 David Wardrop, A.L.C.D.
	1993 W. John A. Rankin, M.A.



## EPILOGUE

### REFLECTIONS IN THE CHURCH OF ST PETER AND ST PAUL, CLARE

Moses saw a burning bush and knew that God was there,  
I sat and felt that presence here, within this church at Clare.

The ancient east window and bright morning sun  
Give colours and patterns, make memories run:  
The names of the donors who lived in the past  
Start thoughts of those others whose names were to last: -  
The "big family's" tablets affixed to the wall,  
The choirboy who carved on the ledge of his stall,  
Church wardens' and carpenter's names on a beam,  
Memorial tablets continue the theme.  
High up, the carved faces of saints, bishops, kings,  
Can help earth-bound thoughts rise to loftier things.  
All these were God's children, some honoured, some lowly,  
Whatever their station they found this place holy.  
Above, in the roof-line, the stone cherubim  
Can hint that our forebears are dwelling with Him.  
The anthems delivered by organ and choir  
Sound praises which circle and rise ever higher  
'Til all find fulfilment in Him.

I've known Him in wafer, wine, singing of psalms,  
In smile of a babe in a young mother's arms,  
In words – **"Peace be with you"** from pew-neighbour heard,  
In cup of fresh coffee, and welcoming word.

*The Green Man-ned porch shows pagan thoughts.....*  
But see! Peter offers the heavenly key, Paul's sword of the Spirit gives  
insight to me:  
The baptismal font standing close by the door reminds those who pass, that,  
despite every flaw,  
Despite all our meanness and weakness and strife, the offer is made of a  
more worthy life.

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In legend the eagle soared sunward in flight,  
To catch, and return with, the pure solar light:  
The lectern, an eagle, brings God's word to man -  
A book full of stories unfolding God's plan:

One window depicts the nativity scene, that birth which no stable could ever  
demean.

A crucifix set by the pulpit portrays what man does to God through his self-  
seeking ways.

The stained glass North window continues this story -  
It shows pompous mankind God's strange road to glory.

The pelican feeding her young with her blood  
Shows life can be given through death's crimson flood,  
While angels in flight shield their eyes from the sight.

### **“Don't seek for the living midst those who are dead!”**

Still true are those words which the angel first said  
When women had asked what a bare tomb could mean:  
The South Chapel window enlightens this scene.  
That bold empty cross standing there on the altar  
Can strengthen believers whenever they falter:  
It seems that it cries out "**He lives! Yes, He lives!**  
His presence continues, and new life still gives",  
“The Lord is here, His spirit is with us”.

But th' sundial now orders us **“Go on your business”**.  
One window combines these: it shows with great clarity  
That life for the Christian means Faith, Hope - and Charity:  
First breathe in this peacefulness up to your fill,  
Then go forth in God's strength to further God's will.