

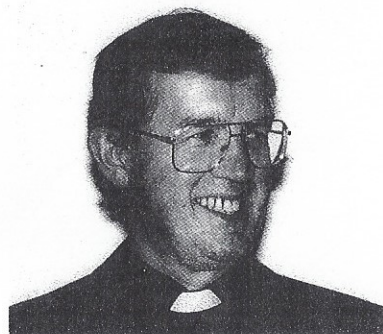
Geoffrey Holley Much was written about Canon Holley's ministry at the time of his retirement in 1992, after 17 years in Loughton, and a proper appreciation of his work will not be attempted here. One might just say that an important, over-riding feature was the central part played by the Eucharist in all his life and achievements.

The present Rector, Revd Grant Welch, was no stranger to the parish on his appointment in 1992, having previously been Team Vicar at Trinity for two years. The pattern of earlier years has been continued with re-decoration of the Church and improvements to the vestries. The conduct of worship has moved with the times with more involvement of the laity and the provision of a monthly Family Service for the increasing number of young families.

As we look back 150 years to the day when the foundation stone of

the Church was laid, we cover a period that has seen far more change than any other 150 year period in history. The railway line had not reached Loughton in 1845 and horse transport was the only means available to bring the bricks and stone, and all the materials necessary to build a church at the top of Loughton Hill.

The fields that surrounded the Church have all gone and most of the big houses are no more, but here and there one can still see a hedge or a large tree marking an ancient boundary. Some of the roads still bear the names of old fields and large houses. One only has to go to the edge of the parish to see what Loughton was like when the first inhabitants arrived, travelling along the River Roding. The forest still marks the passing of each year with the beauty of its changing seasons, just as the church celebrates its festivals and saints in turn. Parishioners come to worship day by day, week by week; baptisms are held, marriage vows made, and the bell still tolls to mark the passing of a life. So it has been for 150 years, and so we hope it will continue to be for the next 150 years and more.



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*Advertisement
from a Parish
Magazine of
1898*

It has been our intention in writing this little book to try to do more than just record dates, events and people which are linked with our church over the years. We also wanted to convey some feeling of what it was like for the ordinary church-goer to worship at St John's at different periods during this time. To discover this there were numerous sources of information, including old church records, minutes of meetings, correspondence, magazines, etc.

This is not meant to be a definitive or complete history but rather a celebration of 150 years of continuous worship in one building. Serious students needing more information are referred to the publications noted below. We acknowledge making free use of them.

A Short History of the Parish of St John's, Loughton

by Margaret Avery
(available at St John's)

The Story of the Parish Church of Loughton, Essex

by P Thompson

Loughton, Essex

by WC Waller

Grateful thanks to

Margaret Lane for preparing the script and to
Stephen Metcalfe for the cover design and page layout.

Eric Dixon

Jim Retter

*The Cover depicts a cut out of St John the Baptist as seen in the
Stained glass window at the east end of the church.*

Chapter 1

Early Loughton

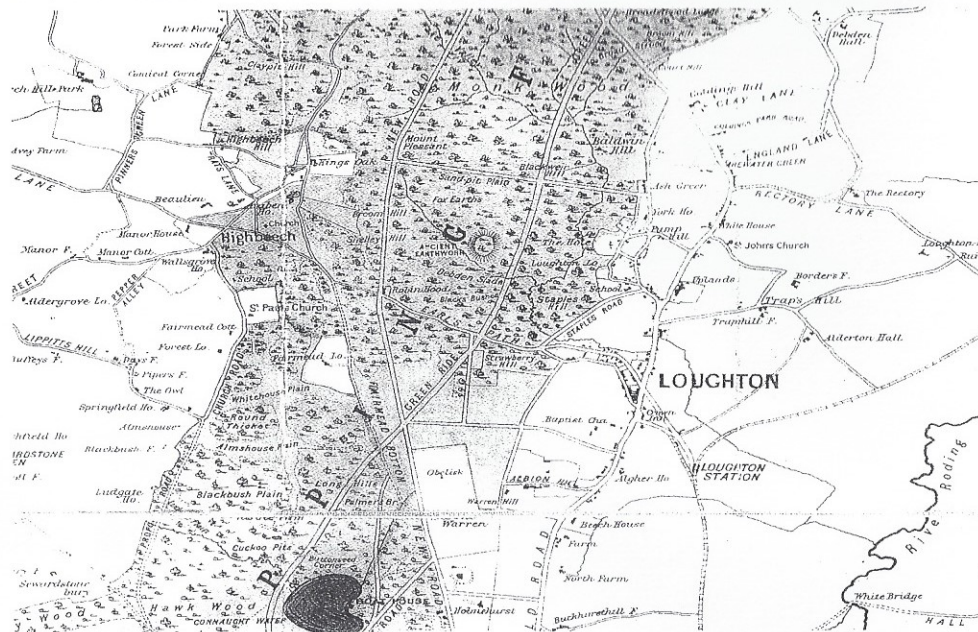
The recorded history of the parish of Loughton goes back into the dim and distant past, and a church was probably in existence here in late-Saxon times. In 1062 King Edward the Confessor confirmed a gift of lands which had previously been given to the Monastery at Waltham. These lands were split up into different estates and among these were recorded the names of Lukington and Tippendene, which can be identified as Loughton and Debden respectively.

Fragments of documentary evidence show that there was a church in Loughton in 1182. This was served by priests who travelled over from Waltham Abbey right up until the Monastery there was dissolved at the Reformation in 1540.

The church was dedicated to St Nicholas and stood very close to where the present St Nicholas is today. The scene surrounding it was entirely rural, presenting a picture of landlords and tenants, the

latter living in rude hovels and paying dues in kind - eggs, animals etc. Records of the church in the early centuries are meagre but drawings exist from the eighteenth century showing a small but substantial building with a nave, chancel and aisle and quoted as having "a pretty wood tower with a shingled octagonal spire rising from a square pyramid".

Near the church stood Loughton Hall, an ancient structure which was the home of the lords of the Manor, and which was said to be in sad decay. It was purchased by Sir Robert Wroth in 1613 from the Crown, thereby acquiring the manorial rights and the right of advowson, or presentation to the rectory. He converted it into an imposing mansion and in so doing acquired large debts. Eventually the possession and advowson was sold to Alderman Whitaker, of London, in 1745 and the succession passed to his daughter Anne in 1770. When she died in 1825 the estate passed to Mr John Maitland, of Woodford Hall, thus beginning the



The Parish of Loughton soon after the arrival of the railway

long association of the Maitland name with the Parish of Loughton.

For seven centuries the ancient church of St Nicholas stood on the site chosen by the earliest church builders in Loughton. It stood in the heart of the parish on a gentle slope beside the old highway that led to Chigwell across Loughton Bridge. The village itself was scattered and isolated, with few changes taking place over the years. By the eighteenth century, however, a few big houses began to appear as rich merchants and professional men started to move out from London, and construction accelerated in the nineteenth century. A directory of 1848 commented on the number of "genteel" houses in Loughton. The railway arrived in 1856, which led to the doubling of the population in twenty years, moving away from St Nicholas and Loughton Hall to the high road and the rising land on either side of it. The centre of

gravity of the parish was moving and with it quite naturally a wish for a church on what a contemporary notice termed "a more convenient site".

The move came in 1845. Most of the old church was demolished in 1846 although part of the remainder was converted into a mortuary chapel. Its passing was regretted by many and a touching letter to the rector records: "We are not at all convinced of the necessity of taking away the present church and therefore cannot cordially approve of the plan which involves this step, especially as it is the church in which we were married, beside other reasons which make it sacred in our esteem".

The present church of St Nicholas was built in 1876, the earlier one having been pulled down soon after the new church had been built.

Chapter 2

The Building of St John's

Loughton, Essex. June 16th 1844,
Notice is hereby given:

That a general meeting of the inhabitants of this parish will be held on Tuesday next, June 18th, at six o'clock in the evening at the National School Rooms to take into consideration the expediency of building a New Church upon a more convenient site in this parish; to appoint a committee to devise means for carrying the same into effect, and to report their proceedings to a Vestry-meeting of this parish to be held on some future but early day.

Anthony Hamilton:
W Whitaker Maitland & J Philby

Rector
Churchwardens

Thus was the original notice signifying the first definite move towards the new Church. At the meeting a committee was appointed. Its first resolution, unanimously carried: "That whereas it is manifest the site of the present church in this parish is most inconvenient being at a distance of more than 3/4 mile from the whole population of the parish with very few exceptions, and the building itself inadequate to the accommodation of those who are

desirous of meeting for public worship of Almighty God according to the forms of the Church of England, it is highly expedient that a new Church be erected upon a site more acceptable to the general body of the inhabitants and more suitable to their numbers".

A number of sites were offered for the new building, including part of a field at the bottom of Trap's Hill where St Edmund's Roman Catholic church now stands and also the site

Right: Some of the old main Post Office in Loughton. One site on Church Hill nearly opposite the house "Meads" was strongly objected to by Mr Brawn, whose home it was, who disliked the idea of looking out on to a church from his windows. Eventually some land in the field in Blind Lane (now Church Lane) was bought from the same Mr Brawn at the cost of £100, and some small gifts of land from neighbours added to it.

One of many letters concerning construction details It was originally estimated that the cost of building would be £3,500 but the figure, including the construction of Church House eventually reached £6,500 approximately. Subscription lists were opened and the money was raised by voluntary subscriptions, with the exception of £1,000 borrowed from the London Insurance Offices. This was repaid

Church Commissioners' Office,
15, Great George Street, Westminster.
16 January 1847

Sir,

I beg to acquaint you that the Commissioners of the Treasury have ordered a Warrant to be prepared for the payment in this Board of £100-3-5 being the amount of the Disbursement allowed on the Vestment & Plate and on building the New Church in the Parish of Loughton Essex.

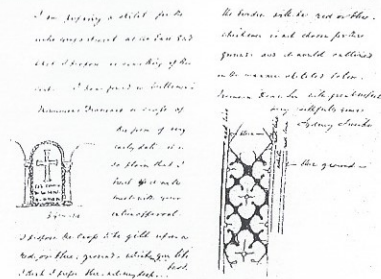
When this sum has been received, it will be repaid to the Treasury with £137-1-8 in this year, and on the 1st day of the month of March next, and on a Draft being signed by three of the Commissioners for payment of the same, the usual papers to enable the parties entitled thereto to receive the Money, will be forwarded to you.

I am,

Sir,

Your faithful and obedient Servant,

Archdeacon Hamilton

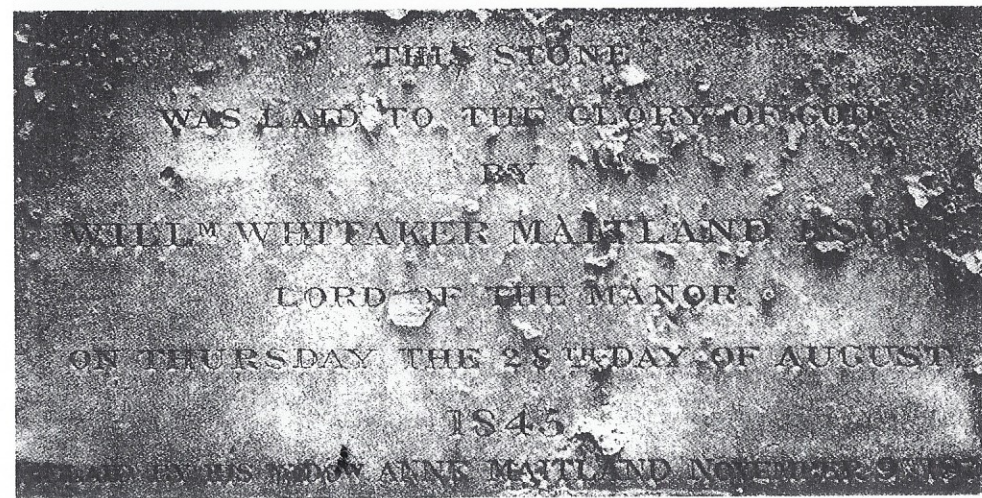


over twenty years. Many people in the parish gave generously, in amounts varying as to their capacities to do so, the sums ranging from one pound to several hundred, the largest coming from the Rector, Archdeacon Hamilton himself, with over £1,000.

The architect appointed was Mr Sydney Smirke, well-known and with an established reputation. Correspondence between the Rector and Mr Smirke shows that progress in the construction did not always proceed smoothly. The Rector suspected strongly of a "want of sobriety" in the first appointed Clerk of Works, who was promptly dismissed. At one stage the wrong kind of bricks were laid and poor quality sand used, necessitating firm action from the architect. His eventual fee was £229.

As a matter of interest Mr Smirke was also responsible for the design of St Mary's Church, Theydon Bois.

The foundation stone was laid on August 28th 1845 by the Lord of the Manor, Mr WW Maitland and the church was consecrated by the Bishop of Rochester (as Bishop of the diocese) on November 4th 1846 and dedicated to St John the Baptist. This was done "in the presence of a numerous body of the inhabitants,



with the observance of such religious ceremonies as were deemed fitting and appropriate upon the commencement of a building to be set aside for the public worship of Almighty God". After the laying Mr Maitland gave a supper party at which there were many guests, including fifteen bricklayers and stonemasons.

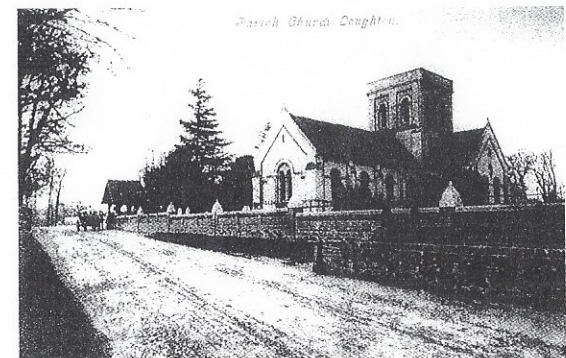
Church House, a small building adjoining the Churchyard was built at the same time, using windows and stone facings from the old St Nicholas. The house was intended to accommodate the Verger and the Sunday School. Boys occupied the upper floor and the girls downstairs - twice on Sundays. Archdeacon Hamilton's list of conditions of the tenancy may seem somewhat severe to modern eyes! The occupier was to be a yearly tenant, paying a nominal rent of 1s., he was to keep the building clean and in good order, was to give up his possession of the middle room on Sundays for the use of the girls' Sunday School, to clean the church every Monday

and Saturday for 1s.6d per week, and was to sweep out the boys' schoolroom for 5s. a year.

The actual design of the church, being one chosen by the committee from a number submitted was of a solid Norman design and stood out well and impressively at the top of the hill for all of Loughton to see.

The foundation stone, relaid in 1876 when the chancel was extended.

Church lane, soon after the building of the Lych gate in 1895



Chapter 3

Early Years of St John's

When St John's was built pluralism was common in the Church of England and priests were often appointed to more than one living. Our first Rector was no exception. In addition to the parish he was also

Rectors:

**Anthony Hamilton, MA
(1804-1851)**

**Thomas Trundle Storks, MA
(1851-1856)**

**John Whitaker Maitland, BA
(1856-1910)**

Archdeacon of Taunton, Canon Residentiary of Lichfield, Rector of St Mary-le-Bow, Chaplain-in-Ordinary to the King, Librarian of St Martin's Library, and Parish Clerk of St Martin's-in-the-Fields! His income

must have been considerable, even allowing for his having to employ deputies.

A revealing insight into matters of those days is provided by the Parish Clerk's notebook. In an extract Mr William Grout writes: "The parishioners of Loughton, Essex complain and justly me-thinks of a want of courtesy that was shown them on the morning of the 26th

August, 1840 by the Parson. The congregation it seems assembled as usual to hear Divine Service and after waiting a long time they were informed that there would be none that day. In the course of the 27th the business was explained by the following announcement in the Court Circular: 'The sermon before the Queen was preached by Archdeacon Hamilton, the lesson read by Revd Alexander Hayden and the Prayers by Dr Notley'. Surely the Archdeacon might have given half a sovereign to some jobbing priest to perform the Duty?"

For more than 20 years St John's remained the only Established Church in Loughton. The population of the parish was steadily increasing since the coming of the railway, especially to the south, and in 1870 the Vestry agreed that a second church was needed. As a result, on June 3rd 1872 St Mary's, although not completed, was consecrated by the Bishop of Rochester. It became the parish church of a new ecclesiastical parish, Loughton St Mary.

In the new church of St John's there were a number of obvious differences from what one would see today. The Baptismal Font stood beneath the tower at the crossing and its present place at the west end was occupied by the choir and organ, and where also places were allocated for children of the National School. The chancel was smaller, with seats rented by the wealthier members of the parish.

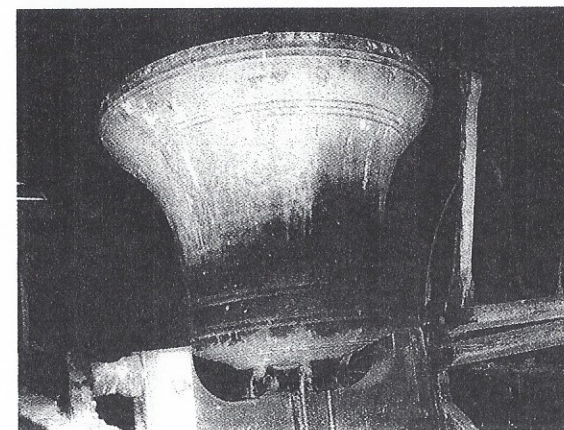
St John's has always had the benefit of a choir, although the official inauguration did not take place until Trinity Sunday, 1862. Then there were 14 adult members plus a juvenile section of picked boys. Surplices were not worn. The parish magazine of 1902 records a special service celebrating 40 years of the choir when the first choirmaster, Mr Clarke, again led the choir (which still included 7 of the original members). In the sermon preached that day it was remarked that these forty years had seen tremendous changes taking place in the country. At the beginning Loughton was a mere hamlet, a cluster of farmhouses and cottages and hedgerows; at the end it was fast developing into a suburb. However, "never swerve from fealty to Him who changeth not".

The first organ was a barrel organ, which appears to have been moved from the old St Nicholas church (where it had been installed in 1832, purchased for the considerable sum of £90). However it was soon superseded by a built organ.

From the old church also was taken the boards containing the Ten Commandments, which are now set on the north wall of the nave above

the doorway, and also a fine Elizabethan chest. This chest has an unusual geometric pattern but the inlay work has long since disappeared. It serves well by being the repository for prayer books etc at the back of the church.

The bell chamber



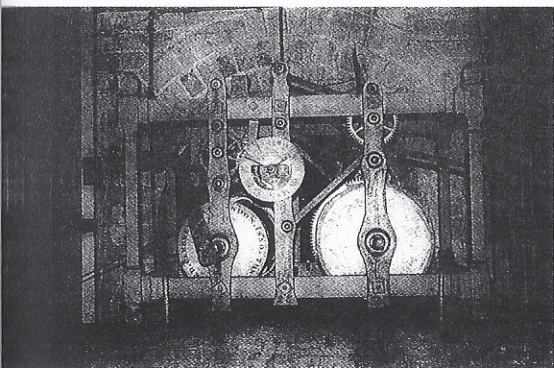
In 1866 and subsequent years a fine peal of 8 bells were hung. The peal was a reproduction of "Messrs Warners' prize peal in the International Exhibition of 1861". The bells were given by various people, the heaviest (tenor) bell being subscribed for by parishioners. The bell weighs 18 cwt.

Bellringers in general in those days seemed to have a reputation for somewhat immoderate behaviour and records show that at St John's they were warned that swearing and drinking in the belfrey or ringing irresponsibly would lead to fines or even expulsion!

"St John's leads the world", may be too strong a reaction to the news that our church was the first one in the country and probably the world to be fitted with a clock powered by electricity, this still in the lifetime of

Michael Faraday. The clock design has since been of interest to horologists although it must be admitted that it was not very successful. The electric current was provided by wires leading from a very large zinc plate and a pit of wood charcoal buried deep in the moist ground near the porch - a very early example of a battery. The clock was replaced by a new turret clock in 1850 keeping the same face, and this is essentially the same clock which is still working today.

*The tower clock,
which replaced
the original
Baine's electric
clock*



The original lighting in the church was provided by candles until 1876.

In his Parish Report for 1874 the Rector, Revd JW Maitland, wrote about the problems and difficulties associated with the church. The organ and choir, situated on a platform at the west end could not be heard, the font (underneath the tower) was in an inconvenient position, and both the lighting and the heating of the church left much to be desired.

It was not surprising therefore, that in the next year the architect and artist, William Nesfield, well known for his designs for many large houses of the period, was asked to

prepare plans for improvements to St John's. At the time he was already overseeing the re-building of Loughton Hall, which had been burned down in 1836 and also the construction of the new (present day) church of St Nicholas.

The work went ahead in 1877. The Chancel was lengthened and the altar raised together with what Nesfield described as "the super altar" behind it. This was the marble shelf on which the six candle sticks now stand. The east wall behind the altar was covered with a dark curtain and on the floor in front of the altar Nesfield placed the four marble scenes from the Old Testament stories. These were his own work and show well his artistic talents. The altar rail was a simple wooden arrangement on brass posts. Directly in front of the rail, on the floor, he placed what he called his "lozenges", various marble designs containing the names of the apostles. This ensured that as worshippers approached the altar, week by week with bowed heads, they were reminded of the basis of their faith.

The old wooden box pews which had been occupied by the family and servants from Loughton Hall were replaced by the choir stalls still used today.

The organ was moved from the back of the church to a new organ chamber at the south side of the chancel, where the clergy vestry is now. A new vestry was built alongside the chamber.

The font was moved to its present position. Gas lighting was introduced by means of a large



brass chandelier placed above the crossing and smaller branch standards in various parts of the church

The main seating was now in the Nave. Poorer parishioners paid a lower pew rent for less spacious seating while some free pews were provided at the back.

At this time suspicions were aroused that these changes were leading to "High Church" practices, with an increased choir involvement tending to monopolise the singing. Surplices and cassocks had been gradually introduced and were now worn by all members of the choir.

From the first some stained glass windows adorned the new church, several being by W Wailes, a famous craftsman of his day. Some of the earliest pieces were in the Nave and

south Transept and suffered bomb blast damage in the 1939-45 war. They were replaced by plain glass.

The three windows at the east end were originally on one level but the middle one was raised to accommodate the reredos.

The Jubilee anniversary in 1895 was celebrated in great style. On Sunday, August 25th the Bishop of Glasgow preached at Mattins and on the following Wednesday the Bishop of Truro was the preacher. A special appeal fund had been set up and a committee met several times during the summer to consider ways in which the money raised could be properly used to celebrate the occasion.

A grand fete was held on Thursday, August 29th at Loughton Hall and the events of the day were well

*Church interior,
c. 1900.*

*Note the gas
chandelier and
pew doors*

A sum of £75 was also appropriated for altering the pulpit and covering it with polished alabaster and mosaics. The pulpit itself was made of Caen stone and one of the record books grumbled that it might have been effectively carved rather than covered. An extract from a letter

1859

John Whitaker Maitland - Rector of Holy
Trinity Church, Longton.

John Whitaker Maitland, Clerk, and of the Manor
of Holy Trinity, Clerk, Churchwarden of Holy Trinity.

Canon Longton

Samuel Maitland do, Isaac Gould
Robert Wallis
W. Gortch
William Dean C.
James Henry Rorill Thomas Wing Secre
John William John Henry Wick.
Samuel Brown, Deacon, Minister, Thomas Charlton
George Hugh St. John. for John Mever & Co
J. Still - Overseer Wm E. Mervet
Wm Berle
North Heath Charles Amis

A granite monument to his memory was erected by subscription and marks the spot near the vestry door where he and his wife are buried.

Signatures on a petition presented to the Magistrates at Epping in 1859 to curtail further licensed premises in Loughton

Chapter 4

The Twentieth Century and Two World Wars

After such a long period under one Rector, one who had been held in such high esteem by his parishioners, it was perhaps unavoidable that his successor did not immediately meet with universal approval. The sweeping of the new broom was met with suspicion by some.

Rectors:

**Arthur Mountford, MA
(1910-1915)**

**Peregrine Neave Maitland, MA
(1915-1940)**

**Michael N Lake, MA
(1940-1955)**

A new altar of gilded oak with a marble frontal, six candlesticks on the altar, coloured vestments, a daily Eucharist; these

sweeping changes were resented by some who anyway felt that there had been a conspicuous lack of consultation.

By 1907 the middle of the three windows at the east end of the chancel had been raised and various changes made to the lighting.

At a public meeting of parishioners held in October 1910 it was

unanimously resolved "that it is the duty of the Parish to provide the Rector with the assistance of a Curate and to guarantee not less than £150 per annum for this purpose". The evidence points to an active church at this time, with an interest in pastoral work both at home and abroad, and various missions well supported. A Shoe and Clothing Club was established, meeting weekly for paying in, and for social purposes.

In fact the early years of the century saw few changes in Loughton although there was a steady growth in the population. According to the Rector's book, used to record main events in the church and in the country, the entry for 1913 merely records "Nothing of importance took place this year".

However all was to change with the coming of the first World War. In common with every other town and village in the land Loughton sent its young men to battle and thereby lost a generation. A War Memorial was set up in the Nave and

dedicated in 1919. On it are 27 names set on an alabaster panel and upon which St George is depicted kneeling in prayer beside the dead dragon. Another reminder of the period is the Sanctuary Lamp, before the Altar. It was given in memory of ten members of the choir who lost their lives in the war.

It was during the war years however that the Parish Hall was erected alongside the Church, providing the focus for the many activities touching upon its work, both within its congregation and in the wider parish. As a result of the building of the hall the clock, which was on the front of the Transept could no longer be seen on the north side. To remedy this the position of the face was raised to high up on the tower.

The years immediately after the war saw many changes and improvements. A new vestry was built giving better facilities for the choir members, clergy and servers. The interior and exterior of the church was re-decorated by the well-known local firm of Foster at a total cost of £120. At last came the opportunity to consider the building of a new organ, which was badly needed. The firm of Roy Huntingford of Walthamstow was finally chosen, with a quotation of £949 and an allowance of £120 for the old organ. This did not turn out to be altogether a wise choice as many problems arose during the installation, not least being the insecure financial position of the organ builder. The instrument was finally completed in November 1929. However, running costs were increased, as whereas the old organ

needed one man to pump the bellows at a cost of 15s per quarter, the new organ required two men at the increased rate of £1 per quarter for each man.



The bells were next in line for improvement. They were by now in a poor state of repair and could not be rung. They were set in order by Messrs Mears and Stainbank of Whitechapel at a cost of £337. To raise this money an appeal was made to the whole of Loughton, collections being made by the Bell Ringers and noted in books authorised and provided by the Rector.

The Parish Hall was in great demand, and the Parish Church Council was already looking to build a new hall, beside the existing building. To this end efforts were made to purchase the field at the side of the hall but, this came to nothing. Later, in 1934 the field at the back of the church was acquired from Mr Whitaker Maitland for the enlargement of the churchyard.

*Belringers.
c 1950*

The Church Council deliberated for a long time over replacing the gas lighting in the church, which had been functioning for the previous 65 years, but the change to electric lighting was finally made in 1934. At the same time an electric blower replaced the old hand worked organ bellows. The operation was not without its drama, as when the pit for the blower was dug, below the present server's vestry, it immediately filled with water, involving considerable expense to waterproof it.

The new lighting was provided by two chandeliers. One was presented by Mr SH Salter and his wife as a thanks offering for his 60 years service in the choir, and the other was given by Mrs Butler-Harris. Six extra lights in the Nave were added in 1940.

The faculty for installing electric light in the church also included forming a side chapel in the south Transept. The Lady Chapel as it came to be known remained until the re-ordering of 1983.



*Church interior,
1950*

The second World War affected everyone, and the burning of London during the air raids could clearly be seen from the top of Church Hill, and all the churches were involved in helping with evacuees and refugees from London.

All the windows in the Nave were broken by bomb blast and were boarded up, and unexploded bombs were reported in the churchyard.

As well as the war news parishioners had to cope with the disturbing information in 1941 that much of the land on the east side of Loughton was to be sold by Commander JW Maitland to the London County Council as the site of a new housing estate. As soon as the war was over the construction of Debden began, eventually to accommodate many of the families from the East End of London who had lost their homes in the Blitz. The rural side of the parish was disappearing and the number of parishioners vastly increasing.

In order to cope with the influx, St Nicholas Church, after having served as a private chapel for the Manor House was put into full use and a new hall and Parsonage built on the opposite side of Rectory Lane. In addition a small timber church, the Mission Church of St Francis was built at Oakwood Hill and in 1953, the Mission Church of St Gabriel's was opened in Grosvenor Drive.

Pressure was also building up on St John's and on its hall. The hall was woefully inadequate for its needs and also the organ was in serious



disrepair. A new congregation was appearing with different perceived values on every aspect of life and religion. The old order had changed and the new order had to be forged.

*Sunday School,
late 1950s*

One of the assistant clergy during this period was Revd Ernest Driver. He had been Vicar of St Matthias, Islington, from 1906 to 1931, at the fountain head in the London area of the Anglo-Catholic movement which he strongly upheld. At the age of 73 and with failing eyesight he retired to live in Tycehurst Hill, and worked as a voluntary assistant with two successive rectors. He readily shouldered much work and the burden became heavier in the war years. His was a familiar figure in the parish. He was walking in the forest one Saturday afternoon after having prepared two sermons for the following day when he collapsed and died. He was much loved and in his funeral address Canon Lake spoke of him as "a person who naturally inspired affection, and just to be with him gave one new energy to do one's work".

Chapter 5

The Post-war Era

Finance: In his annual Parochial Report for 1875 the Rector tells that "the churchwardens complain that the money collected at the offering is not sufficient to defray the necessary expenses of the church",

Rectors:

Bernard Ottaway, MA
(1955-1972)

Robin Bennett, BA
(1972-1975)

Geoffrey Holley, AKC
(1975-1992)

Grant Welch, AKC
(1992-

and he goes on to exhort the parishioners to increase their giving. How this appeal has echoed down the years!

However, in the 1950s came the concept of Stewardship: Time, Talents and Money are God's gifts, entrusted to us as stewards, to be used in his service. The first Parish Stewardship campaign was held in November 1960, when the cost of running the parish stood at £5,300 per year. The main feature was a Loyalty Dinner, held in a large marquee in the grounds of Loughton Hall - a sort of "softening-up" process by which

members of the congregation were encouraged to consider their giving and to pledge realistic amounts when later visited in their own homes. The style of campaign had been very successful in other parishes (it was an imported American idea) but in terms of amounts of money pledged fell somewhat short of the most optimistic expectations - possibly because the weather on the night of the dinner was wet and foggy!

The increased giving could still not keep pace with the needs of an expanding parish and the second campaign was held three years later, the main event being held in the hall of Fairmead School.

By 1974 Parish running costs had risen to £7,640, leading to the necessity of a third campaign, this time the highlight being a Parish Supper held at Lucton Girls' School, in Borders Lane. The relentless upward spiral of costs has continued over the last 20 years and regular appeals have been made to the congregation to give more

generously. By 1995 the figure needed has reached just under £100,000. Our latest campaign has been in a lower key than previous ones, dispensing with meals and after-dinner speeches. In their place a simple information pack was passed amongst parishioners by unobtrusive visitors.

St John's has indeed been fortunate over the years that whenever financial trouble has loomed on the horizon the congregation has risen to the challenge and dug ever deeper into their pockets.

Christian Stewardship:

After the money-raising efforts of the Planned Giving campaign of 1960 a Christian Stewardship committee was set up, focusing particularly on the stewardship of time and talents. It was this committee that for the next ten years put into action current ideas for helping the congregation reach out to make contact with others in the parish. Church representatives were appointed for every road and block of flats, their duties summarised as:

*To call on new arrivals
To inform the clergy of cases of sickness
To perform acts of Christian kindness to anyone, of any or no denomination.*

By 1963 the Road Wardens, as they were called, were organising house meetings as a way of trying to get street neighbours to know each other better.

Help was organised to visit the elderly and give practical help such as lighting fires, particularly at

weekends when local authority services were not available.

A churchyard working party struggled to clear the jungle of weeds, grasses and self-sown trees which filled the south side of the area.

May, 1965 saw the introduction of Baptism Instruction meetings, and later that year "Street Wardens" became "Good Neighbours", with a slightly different brief, particularly the feeding of local information to clergy.

In 1966, the role of house meetings was changed to accommodate the "People Next Door" programme, in which meetings were held to promote discussion and action together among Christians of different denominations in Loughton (sponsored by the Council of Churches).

At about this time a lot of thought was given to the place of Baptism in church life. Should all baptisms take place in front of the whole congregation at a main service? Ideally, yes, but with an average of 100 baptisms per year, this was clearly impractical. Consequently a quarterly 'Act of Reception' service was held at the 10.30am service of Morning Prayer, to which all those baptised during the previous 3 months were invited, together with their families.

The first quarterly Memorial Service was held in the same year, particularly for the relatives of those whose funerals had taken place in the previous 3 months. This also took place at the 10.30am service.

This decade witnessed a remarkable input of energy, coinciding with a

general stirring of consciences and a desire to be more outward looking on the part of most Christians. When in 1971 the Rector announced his impending move to a new parish the activating committee seemed to lose some of its energy as it made way for a new incumbent with new ideas and methods for leading the parish.

Change

The induction of Revd Robin Bennett on February 22nd, 1972 saw the start of another period of change. A parish conference was held in May at the Davenant School and the future was discussed under the headings of Evangelism, Services, Buildings and Finance. This led to changes accepted as normal today, such as the weekly notice sheet and, for the first time, lay-readers assisting with the chalice at Communion. A Deaconess was appointed to join the full time staff.

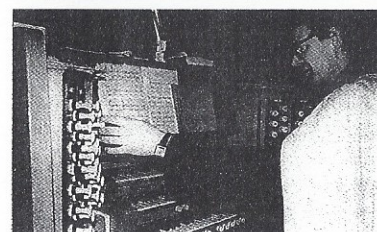
The state of the organ was now giving concern. It had been troublesome for a number of years. Its position in the old organ chamber at the back of the choir stalls, built in 1875, made maintenance difficult. The pneumatic coupling between the keyboard and the instrument often sprang leaks, and breakdowns

were frequent. An Organ Fund was started and plans drawn up to rebuild the organ over the entrance door of the north transept. At about the time that work started on the project the pipe organs in two local churches were being replaced with electronic instruments, one at Loughton Union Church and the other at a church in Leytonstone. Thus, by utilising parts from these instruments it was possible to upgrade the St John's organ from a two manual to a three manual instrument. The console remained in the old organ chamber. The total cost of the work was nearly £10,000 and was dedicated by Revd Patrick Wild, the Rural Dean on May 10th 1973. It was first used by the new organist, Mr John Auton.

The present day regular pattern of Sunday worship was established at this time. The 8.00am Holy Communion service remained unchanged, the Eucharist moved from 9.00am to 9.30am, Mattins at 11.15am and Evening Service at 6.00pm.

On Christmas Eve 1972 St John's featured on the nation's TV screens as the setting of a play performed by members of a weekend course at Debden House. The parish magazine records that as the programme was transmitted late in the evening (and as this was before the days of domestic video recorders), a television set was set up in the Church Hall and many of the congregation watched the programme there and then went across to the church for the midnight service.

November 8th, 1972 was the occasion of a visit by Revd Donald Gray, a member of the General



Synod Liturgical Committee, which had just finished writing the new Series 3 Communion Service. He spoke about the new Service and the congregation was able to share in it as an act of worship, so taking the first tentative steps towards the form of service used today.

Anniversary Celebrations

In 1971 the 125th anniversary was celebrated in some style, possibly because it also marked the last year of Bernard Ottaway's rectorate. The events included a Parish Revue, sporting competitions for the young people and a revival of the old "Beating of the Bounds" Sunday walk. So many people took part in this that two separate walks were organised, one before lunch and one after and several energetic enthusiasts did both.

October brought a Flower Festival which was said, "created a spectacle of unparalleled magnificence in the church and provided a superb backdrop for a service on the actual anniversary of the consecration".

Drama

Over the years a number of plays have been performed in the church by outside groups but the 1970s saw a remarkable blossoming of dramatic endeavour, the moving spirit and driving force being Mrs Winifred Maker. After a long interest in drama, Mrs Maker, in her retirement, concentrated her efforts

on producing plays with religious themes and of recognised worth.

Philip Norman,

Organist and

Choirmaster,

1995

The first, 'Noyes Fludde', served as a finale to the 125th anniversary celebrations in 1971. This was followed in alternate years by 'Christ in the Concrete City', a modern passion play; 'Everyman', "that most beautiful and poignant of all plays in the English language"; 'Murder in the Cathedral' and Christopher Fry's 'The Boy with a Cart'.

In 1981 Win Maker moved away, thus ending a period which not only saw five productions of acknowledged artistic and technical merit, but the creation of a team of persons of disparate ages and abilities drawn from many other churches in Loughton and from varied backgrounds, a wonderful coming together to the glory of God.



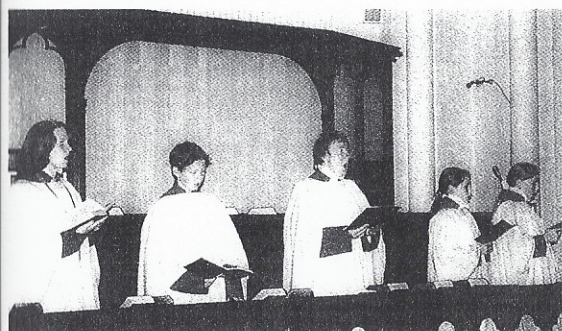
Repairs and Re-Ordering

It is a tribute to its builders that St John's has withstood the ravages of time very well and also to each generation in its stewardship making good the rust and decay.

The Nativity

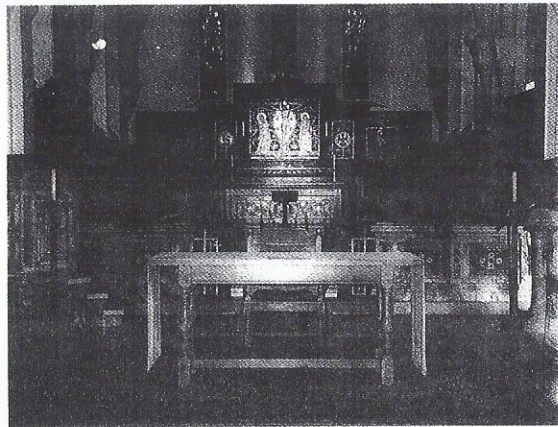
Story

*The choir, first
formed in 1862*



The church was built before the age of roof insulation and energy conservation, a situation that was proposed to be remedied by a Restoration Fund, started in 1978. Repairs to the roof and tower were given first priority, especially as the copper nails which fixed the roof slates had corroded so badly that after a windy night fallen slates would litter the churchyard. The stonework of the tower had also been eaten away in the passing of the years and needed replacing, and brickwork repointing.

Whilst the tower was surrounded by scaffolding the opportunity was taken to repair the clock, which had not worked for many years because of the rusting of a shaft wheel. The cost of all this work was about £14,000.



A major reordering was effected in 1983

In 1981 the electrical wiring was completely renewed the congregation saying goodbye to the six "inverted salad bowls", the total Nave lighting, which had rendered faithful but dim service for many years, as up to the arrival of Revd B Ottaway the two chandeliers at each end of the Nave were only switched on for festivals!

In the records of the ancient Parish of Loughton dated October 25th, 1741 there is the following entry: 'We do Attest not to Pay anything concerning those Pews newly erected without the order of a Vestry'. Some new pews had apparently been unilaterally introduced by the Rector, causing a flutter in the parish.

More pew-inspired flutters were aroused exactly 240 years later when on the same October 25th, 1981, a parish meeting was called to hear proposals from the Rector for the re-ordering of the Nave and Transepts, including banishing the pews in favour of chairs. The chairs v. pews matter proved controversial, but in a deciding vote pews won the day. However, in a good Church of England compromise, pews were to be in the main Nave, with chairs at the back and in the Transepts.

The question of the seating however was just part of a wider problem. Although much had been done to improve and beautify the church over the years the original floor and seating had not changed. The pews were worn and unkind to clothing, the floor had rotted in places, water pipes leaked and the boiler was over 100 years old.

All was to change. The church was to be completely stripped out and re-furnished. Work started in January 1983 and lasted nearly five months during which time the Sunday 9.30am Eucharist was held in the Davenant School Hall, and other services at St Nicholas Church. Funeral and wedding services were held at Holy Innocents Church, High Beach.

When the church re-opened on Whit Sunday it had been dramatically

transformed. New oak pews and seats stood resplendent on new oak flooring, with a carpeted aisle. A new Nave altar table stood on a raised platform underneath the crossing. There was a completely new heating system, walls had been repainted and above the altar was a roof ornamented with golden stars.

The old Lady Chapel which had existed in the south Transept since the 1930s disappeared during the change. It would seem that its altar table was in fact the original altar of the old St Nicholas Church, which had been incorporated into the new St Nicholas and then exchanged with a St John's altar in 1883.

Later in 1983 the reopening of the Church was celebrated with a Parish Festival and on St John the Baptist's day the Bishop of Chelmsford presided, the Provost preached and the Cathedral choir provided the music at the Eucharist.

In 1984, fine altar rails were presented as part of the refurbishment, donated by the Brownies, Guides, Cubs and Scouts.

Further changes were made in 1993 by the creation of a new clergy vestry in the old organ chamber (actually the site of the original vestry), a lavatory and a new choir vestry.

Ecumenism

St John's has been well to the fore in its enthusiasm for co-operating with the other churches in Loughton and has been a member of the Loughton Council of Churches (now renamed Churches Together in Loughton) since its inception in 1944. Much of the original enthusiasm for the project came from Canon Lake.

Services of worship involving all the member churches have been held since 1945, house groups have been formed at various times, lectures and discussions held, an Agape meal eaten together (since 1987) and a procession of witness held every Good Friday along Loughton High Road (since 1979). In all of these activities the congregation of St John's has been well represented and supportive.

The failure of the Anglican-Methodist talks for reunion in 1972 only acted as a stimulus to increase ecumenical co-operation. The Rector at that time, Revd Robin Bennett was a member of the General Synod, and was deeply disappointed at the outcome. His successor, Revd Geoffrey Holley, was the Bishop of Chelmsford's Ecumenical Officer and so it was not surprising that active co-operation with the other local churches was high on his agenda. An interesting development was to follow shortly:

A scheme was put forward for bringing together the two small congregations of St Nicholas Church and the United Reform Church in Borders Lane, which was at the time without a Minister. This eventually resulted in the Revd Patrick Harrower, a Methodist Minister, being appointed to serve both churches. Later, in September 1978 the whole parish was asked to approve his full ministry to all the churches in the parish. A referendum was held: 71% took part, of whom 86% were in favour. Shortly afterward Patrick was authorised to celebrate the Church of England rite.

Although he was well received in the parish the main purpose of

uniting the two small congregations into an effective, witnessing church was not achieved. The scheme was therefore ended in May 1981 and Patrick left in the September of that year to take up another appointment.

By 1985 active co-operation between the congregations of Mannock Drive Methodist Church and St Gabriel's Church, both in Debden, led to joint services at Easter of that year. This was followed by a transfer of the St Gabriel's Sunday services to Mannock Drive, the one congregation now forming the present Trinity Church, able to celebrate in both Anglican and Methodist rites.

In January 1985 representatives of all the churches in Loughton met at St Edmund's Roman Catholic Church to sign a Covenant of Unity, one member of clergy and one member of laity from each church signing.

In 1994, 50 years of working together was celebrated at a special service of commemoration at the Union Church.

only to be the residence of the vergers but also to double as a meeting place for the Sunday School. This continued until the Parish Hall was built in 1914-15.

In 1900 a stern regimen existed on a Sunday. There was a Bible class for the choir boys at 9.45am, before the 11.00am Morning Service with another Sunday School for boys being held in the afternoon. On Thursday at 5.30pm there was a Young Woman's Bible Class and other Sunday classes were held at the York Hill School.

By 1931 Sunday School met at 10.15am in the Parish Hall and at 3 o'clock, to be followed by a young peoples' Bible Class in the church at 4.00pm. This pattern continued until about 1966, when afternoon school closed, and the children met in the hall while their parents attended the 10.30am Mattins service in church. Eventually the present pattern was established of a Junior Church with its own activities in the hall, later joining the congregation at the Eucharist.

Young People

The parish magazine for November, 1932 records: "A troop of Scouts has been formed in connection with the Church. Mr H Houchin has been appointed Scoutmaster and Mr N Brunt his assistant. The troop numbers at present 20 members and meets on Saturday evenings in the parish hall at 7.00pm. At the same time we hope to start a Pack of Cubs. Miss L Rann has consented to act as Cub Mistress....."

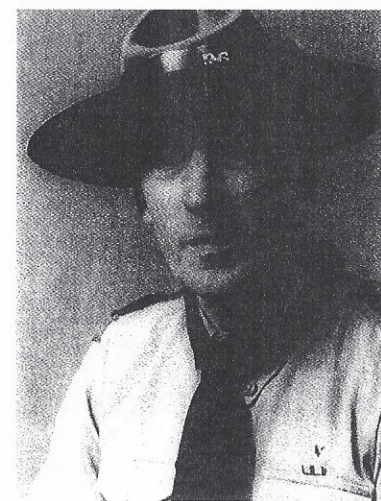
For many years previous to this there had been a flourishing club for boys and young men, which also had football and cricket teams associated with it. It was because of

this that a prominent member of St John's congregation who had recently been appointed secretary of the local district Boy Scouts Association, suggested to Harold Houchin that a St John's troop be formed, eventually becoming the 30th Epping Forest group.

By March 1933 it was recorded that the numbers in the Troop had risen to 28 and the Cub Pack to 20..... "so we now have as many boys as we can conveniently manage for the present". The movement had obviously met with considerable enthusiasm, although funds were short for the purchase of equipment. It flourished under its first Scoutmaster, with an ethos of strong discipline and competitiveness. The familiar blue scarf had its origins in the colours of the old Boys Club football team of blue and white.

By 1938 a Rover Crew was started, who used to meet in the wooden hut at the back of the Church Hall. During the war the Scouts were unable to use the hall as it was taken over by the Home Guard, who had a look-out post on top of the Church tower. The hut consequently became the one Scout Hut.

It is fitting that tribute be paid to Harold Houchin. His easy-going nature and unassuming manner brought close friendship with all whom he came into contact with, and he became "Skip" to all the parish. He died in 1966 and the Rector, writing in the magazine spoke for many: "I have no doubt that in years to come people may well ask 'who was Harold Houchin?' and get no answer. But to all of us who knew him he is the most unforgettable character we have



Harold Houchin, 'Skip'

ever known. Here was a man so touched by the finger of God that wherever his life touched the lives of others it left an indelible mark".

When the new scout HQ building was dedicated on November 19th, 1972 it was named the Houchin Memorial Hall.

Like all such voluntary organisations the fortunes of the Troop have waxed and waned over the years, but memorable anniversary dinners were held in October 1982 and 1992, and at the present time a strong Supporters Association organises a variety of events.

A Guide Company had existed at the Loughton County High School for many years and Miss Gladys Cowmeadow played a prominent part in running it.



Cubs with Hovercraft, constructed by members of the group. July 83

The 50th Anniversary of the Loughton Council of Churches was held at St. John's



Sunday School

Work among young people has always played an important part in the life of St John's. When Church House was built its purpose was not



Margaret Avery,
OBE, theologian
and teacher,
member of St.
John's for many
years

Gladys was a stalwart in the parish for many years and was the chief organiser of an outburst of hassock-making working parties in the early sixties which completely replaced the existing kneelers and the bulk of which still grace the church.

There were occasional Church Parades organised before the St John's Guide Company was instituted.

The magazine first mentions the formation of a Guide Company in October, 1938: "It is proposed to form a company of Girl Guides in connection with the Parish Church. Miss Eileen Cane has kindly promised to act as Captain and Miss Denise Burton as assistant. All girls wishing to join should attend a meeting to be held in the Hall on October 5th." This group became the 2nd Loughton Company. In fact, in 1937 there were already a number of girls' organisations - the Guild of Our Lady for the over 14s, the Girls Friendly Society and a Girls Club, meeting every Friday evening.

The first Brownie Pack began in 1941 and a second in 1958. It wasn't until the post-war era that

any mixed youth organisations were formed.

In April 1941 a mixed Youth Club was started and by 1943 it listed its activities as follows:

<i>Mondays</i>	<i>Games for both sexes</i>
<i>Tuesdays</i>	<i>Dramatics for both sexes</i>
<i>Wednesdays</i>	<i>Boys gymnasium</i>
<i>Thursdays</i>	<i>Girls PT</i>

The young people of those days were without the multiplicity of interests and activities available to the latest generation and such a full programme met a demand for a meeting place for youngsters outside the home.

Later on the club met only on Thursdays for combined social activities and this pattern has continued with various changes in name and leadership to the present. The group CHYPS was started in 1979 and meets fortnightly for a wide range of activities.



Chapter 6

Rectors and Their Rectories

Old maps of Loughton show the rectory situated at the junction of Pyrles Lane and Rectory Lane, one entrance being from Pyrles Lane along what is now Lawton Road, and the other from Rectory Lane. A long, gravelled drive led in from the latter to a carriage circle outside the front door. The house itself was a long, double storey building with white-washed walls and a grey slate roof and was barely visible from the road because of the many large shrubs and trees which filled the garden. Today the only evidence of it is a short piece of boundary hedge running parallel to Pyrles Lane.

The first Rector of St John's, Archdeacon Hamilton, did not live at the Rectory but at Debden Hall, which came into the Hamilton family when the Rector's grandfather married his third wife, Charlotte Styles in 1745.

His predecessor, Revd John Salt-Lovat, seems to have lived there and during 1781 he spent £876 on repairs to the house and also

improvements to the glebe, which comprised the open space known as Hillyfields and another field beyond the Rectory, bordering Rectory Lane.

When the Archdeacon died in 1851 the living was first offered to his son, Walter Kerr Hamilton, but he declined it as he was already a Canon of Salisbury and considered that he ought to hold no other preferment. He later became Bishop of that diocese. Two windows in the church commemorate members of the Hamilton family. The St Gabriel window at the side of the old high altar was given in memory of Sarah Pearse, a cousin of the old Rector, and the St Joanna window in the chancel commemorates Thomas and Jane Sotheby, Jane being a daughter of the Rector.

The Archdeacon's successor was Revd Thomas Storks, who had been his curate since 1843 and had effectively run the parish as his Rector had a long list of other appointments making calls upon his

Pergrine

Maitland, at the

time of his move

to Bradwell

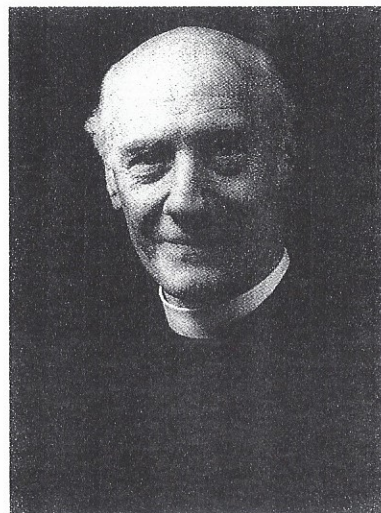
time. While he was curate Storks had lived in Goldings Hill, just above the almshouses. Church Hill and Goldings Hill were then part of what was known as London Road. It is not known whether he moved into the Rectory or stayed in his old house during the five years of his rectorate. The census returns of 1851 and 1861 both show a caretaker living in the Rectory.

In 1856 Revd John Whitaker Maitland became Rector, having previously been curate at Bishop's Stortford. As he was also Lord of the Manor of Loughton he lived at Goldings Manor and then at Loughton Hall. He is remembered for his involvement in the Forest enclosures, details of which are well documented elsewhere, and also as a faithful priest and a zealous public servant. His sister married Revd John Gott in 1858, who later became Bishop of Truro. He was a regular visitor at Loughton Hall and it seems most probable that he had a strong influence on the Rector, leading to changes in churchmanship which began to appear at this time.

A few days before he died in 1910 Maitland offered the living to Revd Arthur Mountford, who introduced a more catholic pattern of worship. Eucharist services were held alongside the traditional Mattins, thus creating a very broad churchmanship which has become the tradition in St John's.

He did not please all the congregation, although he seems to have had the support of most people as it is recorded that it was necessary to arrive early at Sunday evening service to be sure of a seat. However he did upset a minority of influential people and this led to

him leaving the parish in 1915. During his rectorate he occupied a house in the Uplands.



Mountford was succeeded by Revd Peregrine Neave Maitland, the youngest son of John Whitaker Maitland. For a while he continued to live in the house occupied by Mountford at the bottom of the Uplands. The Loughton Directory of 1923 gives his address as Uplands Cottage, Uplands Avenue. Soon after this he married and moved to a house at the corner of Church Hill and St John's Road, which became the Rectory. This house does not seem to have been completely to his liking for in 1937 he asked the Parish Church Council for permission to sell the Rectory if the opportunity arose, but nothing came of it and he stayed there until 1940.

In his churchmanship he maintained the pattern of worship started by his predecessor.

It was largely through his efforts that the field behind the church with the

right of way to Marjorams Avenue was purchased, and land at the side of the hall on which a new Church Hall could be built, was given.

In 1940 Maitland left to become Rector of Bradwell and was succeeded by Revd Michael Lake. His was the difficult task of leading the parish through the war years. As more people, both men and women, joined the Services, (a book records over 270 names of parishioners in the armed forces,) more of the day-to-day work of the parish was taken on by the Rector. By early 1945 he was making plans to welcome home those who had been away at the war with a series of social events, and to commemorate those who had died by building a memorial hall. He was also much concerned with provision of church facilities on the new estate of Debden which was then being developed. He left to be the incumbent of Stansted Mountfitchet in 1955.



The arrival of Revd Bernard Ottaway saw changes in the style of leadership to a much more laity-

orientated system. A number of Lay Readers were trained and the choir allowed a greater freedom of musical choice.

The stewardship campaigns have already been mentioned, and it was in this time that the traditional Prayer Book services were replaced with Series 2 at all except the 8.00am Sunday morning Communion.

The Rectory at the top of Church Hill continued to be used but it was a costly house to heat and maintain. It was at this time that suggestions were made and plans drawn up, for a new Rectory to be built in the churchyard at the south side of the church, but before they could be taken very far the Rector left to become Rector of Birdbrook-with-Sturmer.

Revd Robin Bennett continued the changes begun by his predecessor, although many in the parish found difficulty in accepting the pace at which he wanted to move. The change to the new Series 3 services was made and Mattins on Sunday moved to 11.15am, a change from which it never recovered, leaving the 9.30am Eucharist as the main morning service.

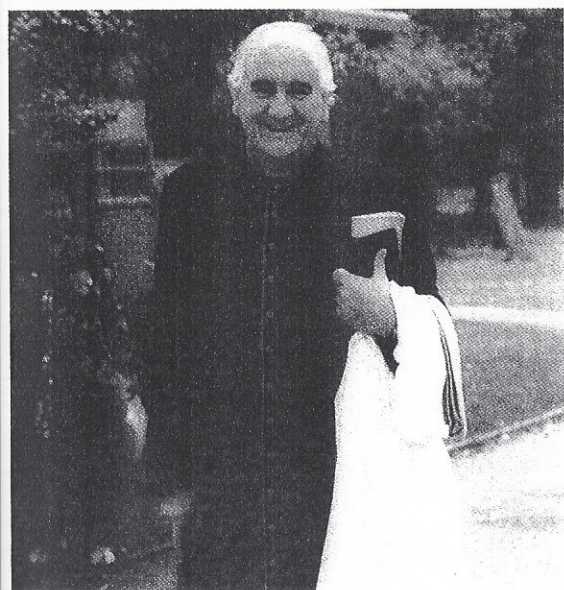
When Revd Geoffrey Holley became Rector it was agreed that the Rectory on Church Hill was no longer a suitable house and during the interim period before the present Rectory adjacent to the church, was built, the Rector lived at 48 Hilltop.



Above: Bernard Ottaway, on his eighteenth birthday

Left:

Michael Lake, when first appointed Rector, 1940



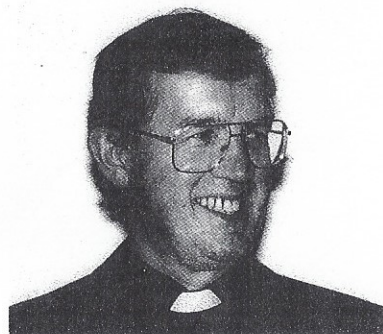
Geoffrey Holley Much was written about Canon Holley's ministry at the time of his retirement in 1992, after 17 years in Loughton, and a proper appreciation of his work will not be attempted here. One might just say that an important, over-riding feature was the central part played by the Eucharist in all his life and achievements.

The present Rector, Revd Grant Welch, was no stranger to the parish on his appointment in 1992, having previously been Team Vicar at Trinity for two years. The pattern of earlier years has been continued with re-decoration of the Church and improvements to the vestries. The conduct of worship has moved with the times with more involvement of the laity and the provision of a monthly Family Service for the increasing number of young families.

As we look back 150 years to the day when the foundation stone of

the Church was laid, we cover a period that has seen far more change than any other 150 year period in history. The railway line had not reached Loughton in 1845 and horse transport was the only means available to bring the bricks and stone, and all the materials necessary to build a church at the top of Loughton Hill.

The fields that surrounded the Church have all gone and most of the big houses are no more, but here and there one can still see a hedge or a large tree marking an ancient boundary. Some of the roads still bear the names of old fields and large houses. One only has to go to the edge of the parish to see what Loughton was like when the first inhabitants arrived, travelling along the River Roding. The forest still marks the passing of each year with the beauty of its changing seasons, just as the church celebrates its festivals and saints in turn. Parishioners come to worship day by day, week by week; baptisms are held, marriage vows made, and the bell still tolls to mark the passing of a life. So it has been for 150 years, and so we hope it will continue to be for the next 150 years and more.



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