ST. PETER'S CHURCH, SUDBURY.

By BASIL OLIVER.

William FitzRobert, Earl of Gloucester, in the 12th century, but previous to 1183—the year of his death—granted the " Church of St. Gregory with the Chapel of St. Peter " to the nuns of Nuneaton, in Warwickshire. A church on the same site is referred to in the Taxation of Pope Nicholas in 1288 ; it continued to serve as a chapel of ease to St. Gregory until the 16th century. Though portions of the walls appear earlier in date, the existing building is for the most part late 15th century work, the date of the nave-roof being, however, considerably later. The former roof was presumably similar in character to, and in all probability as beautiful as such well-known East Anglian examples as those of Mildenhall and Woolpit. There is some justification for this assumption, because we know that William Dowsing, the Parliamentary visitor, records in his diary under the date January 9th, 1643, that he took down " divers Angels, twenty at least, on the roof of the Church." The present roof is said to have been constructed forty-two years later.

There are some irregularities in the plan of the building, perhaps the most noticeable being the distinct orientation of the chancel, due to it having been built at an angle with the nave. The most likely theory to account for this seems to be that the chancel, or, at least, its foundations, were built at an earlier date than the rest of the church. This explanation seems a possible solution to anyone who has had occasion to measure and make plans of old churches which are almost without exception full of similar irregularities, one part being seldom exactly square with another. Early builders were not so mechanically precise as modern workmen. The aisles come right up to the west wall of the tower, which is usual, and the north-west corner of the north aisle is by no means rectangular. Although there is now no apparent reason for this, it was doubtless deliberately built out of the straight for some very good reason. The magnificent carving of the screens to the chancel is the chief feature of the church. These screens are good examples of such work, and are in excellent preservation. Only the lower panels of the rood-screen remain, with painted figures of saints, most regrettably repainted by Gainsborough Dupont at a time when church restoration was so little understood.

Unfortunately only one or two old windows remain ; those at the west end of the south aisle containing some particularly delightful plain 18th century glazing. In most of the windows not only has the original glazing disappeared, but also the old

tracery with all its charming little inaccuracies. This has been ruthlessly swept away and replaced by a lifeless mechanical design, which was thought to be an exact copy.

A bequest was made in 1456 towards a new baptismal font, the basin still remaining, and about which Martin, the Suffolk Antiquary, records a curious tradition. It is said that about the year 1654, during the Commonwealth period, the then Mayor of Sudbury—John Cooke—took the font from the church and tried to use it as a horse-trough, but his horses, snorting at it and refusing to drink, he used it as a pig-trough ; it was subsequently restored to the church.

The " Burying Cloth " or " Alderman's Pall " as it is now called is an exquisite and very rare piece of needlework ; it is said to date from the 15th century.

Another priceless treasure belonging to this church is a 17th century pulpit-cloth, the coat of arms are most beautifully embroidered. It is in every way thoroughly characteristic of the period. Until early in the 19th century, as shown in old prints, the west end of the church had houses built up close to it in the Continental manner. These were gradually removed at a cost of £4,000, between the years 1829 and 1844.

ALL SAINTS' CHURCH, SUDBURY.

There is little doubt that there was a church on the same site with a chapel attached to it in Ballingdon in the eleventh century.

All Hallows' or All Saints' has always been a distinct parish church, and similarly to the other Sudbury churches it is not unlikely that part of the earlier building may be incorporated at the east end with the existing church. Anyhow, we know that about the year 1150 this church with the chapel of Belidune (Ballingdon) was purchased of Eli de Semer by Adam the Monk, cellarer of the Abbey of St. Alban's. A charter of Henry II. confirmed the purchase. Two years after the accession of Henry III. the Pope's grant of Privilege respecting the church and chapel was obtained, and documents of Edward II., Richard II., and Henry V. refer to it. After Henry VIII. had dissolved the Abbey of St. Alban's the living was for a long time a very poor one. The Rood Screen was taken down in Edward VI.'s reign, but the screens enclosing the chapels still remain. The Lambeth Records state that during the Dutch War in the reign of Charles II. the church was converted into a prison. The original oak benches were probably standing in the reign of Queen Anne, or even later ; but at the time of the Gothic revival the old seating was removed, and sham early

Victorian "copies" of old poppy-headed benches were made. While most of the building is fifteenth century work, having been built in the reigns of Richard III. and Henry VII., the arches at the sides of the chancel (partly blocked up by later work) are fourteenth century.

The Rev. Charles Badham, in his book on All Saints' Church, mentions the shields, leaves, and quatrefoils ornamenting the flat mouldings of the nave arcade, and refers to them as of a "comparatively rare occurrence." This is a mistake, for on the contrary, they are quite usual, and are characteristic of the style, especially in East Anglian churches.

Thanks to Mr. Badham's diligent and patient researches among the Harleian MSS. at the British Museum, and from other sources, we have some reliable data as to the church's history.

Thomas Schorthese, of Sudbury, weaver, in his will, dated December 30th, 1459, bequeathed money to the church for various purposes, among them "to the fabric of the north aisle, forty shillings."

Joan Dennys, of Sudbury, in her will of June 6th, 1460, bequeathed "20 shillings to make one arch between the Church and Chapel, on the north part of the same church."

There were originally porches on both north and south sides, but nothing whatever is known of that on the north. The tower, like that of St. Gregory's, is of excellent design and splendid proportion. It seems a pity that the fine west door, formerly and correctly the principal entrance, is not still used. By the use of the south door the vista towards the east end is entirely lost.

The roofs are original, that to the nave bears faint traces of mediæval painting. The 15th century screens are particularly fine and almost as good as those in St. Peter's. The pulpit is thoroughly well designed, and has a charming outline. It dates probably from the early part of Henry VII.'s reign, with the exception of the stone plinth and monogram on the front panel, and certain sharp and mechanical, obviously "restored," portions. Up to 1850 it had been hidden by painted deal boards.

The disused "Priest's Room" over the vestry is an unusual feature.

The organ stands in what used to be the north or Sir Thomas Eden's Chapel, and makes it somewhat difficult to see an unusual and pleasantly coloured genealogical tree of the Eden family. This is not only very interesting from an heraldic point of view, but is also quite a decorative piece of old work unspoilt by restoration. With regard to its date it is known that about the year 1593 Sir Thomas Eden, Kt., built Ballingdon Hall, where the Earl of Essex resided after being banished from the Elizabethan Court ;

so the inference is that it is Jacobean, or of later 17th century
workmanship. This chapel was probably erected or re-erected
when the north aisle was rebuilt. At its south-west corner was
the entrance and ascent to the rood-loft, since removed. It was
one of the burial places of, the families of Eden, of Ballingdon
Hall, and of Waldegrave of Smallbridge Hall, near Bures, who
were related, the mother of Sir Thomas Eden being a Waldegrave.
The last member of the family to reside at Ballingdon Hall was
John Eden, who married Anne, the daughter of Oliver Raymond,
of Belchamp Hall, who died in 1675, and was buried in the Eden
Chapel beside her husband, who had died the year before. This
branch of the family then became extinct.

It is impossible to say how many members of the ancient
family of Waldegrave were buried in this chapel previous to 1564,
the date of the commencement of the Parish Registers. In these
Registers the most curious and interesting entries are those which
were during the Commonwealth period.

Edward Waldegrave was the first of the Smallbridge family
to migrate to Sudbury. His house formerly stood to the south-
east of the churchyard on the other side of the road, where the
Church Schools now are.

It was due to the influence of this same Sir Edward Waldegrave,
Kt., that Sudbury obtained its charter of incorporation in 1554.
In 1557 he was appointed Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster,
and in the same year was returned to Parliament as one of the
members for the county of Essex. An earlier Waldegrave, namely
Sir William, who died on January 30th, 1528, lived to the ripe
old age of 103, and was buried in the parish church of St. Mary at
Bures, in a tomb previously built by him. One of the provisions
in this centenarian's will was that he should be buried within the
space of twenty-four hours after his decease. The South Chapel
or Chantry, which is not necessarily a separate building, and is
defined by an old writer as a sacred edifice "instituted and endowed
with possessions, that masses might be sung for the soules of the
founders and their kindred" is supposed to have been founded
by John Felton. It may be mentioned that the widow, Joan
Dennys, whose will of June 6th, 1460, has been already referred
to, bequeathed twenty pence to one Henry Boorham, chaplain of
the Chantry, to pray for her soul. There is a good piscina in the
south wall of this chapel.

The Felton family originally came from the parish of Felton
in Northumberland, in which there was a castle of great antiquity.
The Sudbury Feltons are thought to be buried beneath the floor
of this chapel.

About 1700 this chapel appears to have become the burial

place of the Gibbon (or Guibon) family, several of whom were members of the Corporation. Beneath the chancel floor are buried John Olyver, vicar, who died in 1424, and William Puttock, vicar, who died in 1572. So also is John Little, Esquire, who married Anne Eden. He owned Ballingdon Hall, and was patron of the living. He was High Sheriff of Essex in 1694, and died in 1720. In a vault on the north side of the chancel are interred members of the Burkitt family, who settled in Sudbury in 1643. The Burkitts were supporters of Cromwell, to whom they were related. For more than two centuries their residence stood at the corner of Burkitt's Lane (by the post office), where John Bunyan was entertained by them. Members of the family are said to have been the originals of characters in Bunyan's allegory. From the " St. James's Chronicle " of November 26–28, 1844, which quotes from the " Suffolk Herald," we learn that early in the morning on the Wednesday previous this church narrowly escaped being destroyed by fire.

The sexton discovered the roof was on fire, and that the molten lead was pouring down into the body of the church. With assistance the fire was got under, and fortunately the damage consisted of no more than the burning through of the ceiling, joists and boarding, and of a hole made in the roof about two feet in diameter. The cause was due to the " carelessness of some plumbers who had been repairing the leads during the day, and kindled a fire on a flag stone placed upon the roof ; this stone had split with the intense heat, and the embers falling through the fractures had ignited the timber."