

GREAT MIGRATION TOUR TO ENGLAND
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TOUR TALK

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PARISH CHURCH ARCHITECTURE – THE BASICS

On almost every day of the Great Migration Tour, we will be visiting one or more parish churches in Essex or Hertfordshire. Apart from the intrinsic importance of these buildings as the place of baptism of so many of our immigrant ancestors, we will want to know something of the meaning of these buildings in the lives of our ancestors. In this issue of *Tour Talk* we will take a look at the basic features of the layout and construction of these churches. In the next issue we will discuss the internal ornamentation and furnishings of the churches, the importance of these features in the lives of the parishioners, and the attacks on these decorations during periodic episodes of iconoclastic activity.

Our guide to the basic architecture will be Hugh Braun, *Parish Churches: Their Architectural Development in England* (London, 1970, 1974). Brian's approach is refreshing, in that it challenges some of the traditional categories of church architecture. For example, in describing the Gothic period of construction, he does not adhere to the older trifold division of the period into Early English, Decorated and Perpendicular. He notes that these phases were not clearly separated in time, and are frequently mingled in construction of a single period. Also, he argues that what was often referred to as Norman elements in church design may sometimes more properly be termed Saxon.

The fundamental organizing feature of church architecture, from the grandest to the simplest, is the requirement to orient the church with respect to Jerusalem, so that the church is laid down on an east-west axis, with the chancel, containing the altar, at the east end of the building. All else flows from this alignment of the floor plan.

Braun argues that the most important model for most of the parish churches we see now was the older churches of Byzantium. In these, the main body of the church, the nave, was separated from the chancel by a crossing, with a tower or steeple being built over the crossing. In most English parish churches, the tower ceased to be erected over the crossing, and eventually migrated to the west end of the church. As a result, in many smaller churches there may be no crossing.

There were usually three entrances to the church, on the south, west and north sides. When all three of these entrances were present and in use, processions on some feast days would leave the church through the north door, move around the church in a clockwise direction, and reenter through the west door. As the west tower also incorporated bells and perhaps an organ, the west door in many churches fell into disuse. Also, because of

the climate, the north door also became less frequently a main point of access. As we move from parish to parish, take note of the relative frequency of the employment of the south door rather than the north door as the main point of entrance, and see if you can figure out why the north door sometimes took precedence over the south.

A second important feature of the church was its height, both as an aspiration toward heaven and as an attempt to tower over the rest of the buildings in the village. In most early English parishes, this latter goal was not difficult. The tower usually took the form of a wooden spire, first over the eastern crossing, and then later on the western tower. These wooden spires, of course, were frequently the victims of fire, from lightning strikes or otherwise. As lead replaced thatch as a roofing material, towers were often capped in lead, and the spire was omitted. But, as protection against lightning strikes came into use, towers were rebuilt. Some of the steeples that we will see are of relatively recent construction, but probably replace any number of earlier steeples.

As parishes increased in size, the main options for expansion were only to the north and south, with growth to the east prevented by the chancel and to the west by the tower. Most churches would expand first to the north, adding a north aisle, and then after that a south aisle. If this expansion were undertaken during the period when the church was still roofed in thatch, this could cause some engineering problems, as the thatched roofs had to be more high-pitched than the later lead roofs. In some churches the changeover from thatched to leaded roofs may still be seen in scars on the outside of the nave.

The final form of a fully-developed parish church, then, would include a central nave, flanked by a chancel to the east, a tower (perhaps with spire) to the west, and aisles to the north and south. There would be a main entrance through the south porch, or, less frequently, the north porch; the west door would be present but probably not used. There might be some remnant of a crossing, or transept. As we move around on our tour compare, for example, Saffron Walden, an excellent example of a fully-developed church in an affluent market town, to High Laver, which never grew much beyond its medieval size.

In the second installment of this article, we will look at such internal features as wall paintings, the rood loft and rood screen, the piscina and other functional and decorative additions.

GREAT MIGRATION IMMIGRANTS FROM BISHOPS STORTFORD

Once we have gathered in all the tour members at Heathrow on 5 August and are on our way to base in Chelmsford, our first and only stop along the way will be at Bishops Stortford in Hertfordshire, about fifteen miles northwest of Chelmsford. There we will visit the church and have lunch directly across the street at the Boars Head.

Although this parish was not a hotbed of Puritanism, a number of Great Migration immigrants came from this parish.. The minister at Bishops Stortford in the early 1630s

was Richard Butler, a conformist who would on occasion preach against the Puritans. When Samuel Rogers, of the powerful Puritan ministerial Rogers family, came to Bishops Stortford as chaplain to Lady Denny, he complained of the dullness of Butler's sermons and of the lack of spiritual sustenance in the town (Tom Webster, *Godly Clergy in Early Stuart England: The Caroline Puritan Movement, c.1620-1643* [Cambridge, England, 1997], pp. 136-37).

Just to the south of Bishops Stortford in Hertfordshire are the parishes of Sawbridgeworth, Widford, Ware and Great Amwell, all of which had close connections with the important Great Migration parish of Nazeing, just across the border in Essex. In this issue of *Tour Talk* we will look at immigrants from Bishops Stortford and Sawbridgeworth, reserving our investigation of the other parishes for our next issue. Given the number of immigrants from these places, our lists may not be complete. If we have omitted your favorite immigrants, let us know and we will include information on them in the future.

1) **William Denison** was baptized at Bishops Stortford on 3 February 1571, son of John and Agnes (Wylley) Denison. He married Margaret Monk there on 7 November 1603 and had seven children born there, before coming to Roxbury in 1631 [GMB 1:521-24; NEHGR 158:361-63].

2) **William Chandler** was baptized at Bishops Stortford on 12 October 1595, son of Henry Chandler. He married twice in England, and most of his children were baptized at Bishops Stortford, before his settlement in Roxbury in 1637 [NEHGR 85:141-45].

3) **George Jacobs**, one of the witches executed at Salem in 1692, married at Bishops Stortford on 27 June 1639. Through his mother he was closely related to other New England immigrants from the same place [TAG 79:3-12, 209-17, 253-59]. (The first installment of this article has a useful chart that shows the complicated connections among a number of Bishops Stortford families with New England offshoots.)

4) **Walter Desborough** of Saffron Walden married Phebe Perry of Sawbridgeworth and had four children baptized at Saffron Walden before moving to Bishops Stortford, where he had six more children baptized, then moved to Roxbury by 1634 [GM 2:2:342-44; TAG 80:261-63].

5) **John Norton** was baptized at Bishops Stortford on 9 May 1606, son of William Norton [GM 2:5:272-80]. After graduation from Cambridge with a BA in 1624 and an MA in 1627, Norton served briefly as curate at Bishops Stortford and then as chaplain to the Masham family at High Laver. He sailed for New England in 1635 and settled first at Ipswich, and then moved to Boston in 1653.

6) **James Howe** married Elizabeth Dane at Bishops Stortford on 27 June 1628 and had three children buried or baptized there from 1629 to 1634 [GM 2:3:431-35]. He had settled at Roxbury by 1635, when he and his wife were admitted to the church there.

7) **John Dane** moved from Little Berkhamstead, Hertfordshire, to Bishops Stortford about 1615, and then came to New England in 1636, where he settled at Roxbury [NEHGR 132:18-19]. His son left an important narrative of his own life, which includes information on other members of the family [NEHGR 8:147-56]. Elizabeth Dane, wife of James Howe, was daughter of the elder John Dane.

GREAT MIGRATION IMMIGRANTS FROM SAWBRIDGEWORTH

Sawbridgeworth sits immediately to the south of Bishops Stortford, separated from the latter parish only by the smaller parish of Thorley. The eastern border of Sawbridgeworth is the Stort River, which is also the border with Essex. Nazeing in Essex is only six miles to the southwest, and many Sawbridgeworth families had Nazeing connections.

1) **Edmund Brown** was baptized at Sawbridgeworth on 4 May 1600, son of Edmund and Mary (Cramphorne) Brown. He had arrived in Boston by 1634 [GM 2:1:416-18].

2) **Isaac Perry** was baptized at Sawbridgeworth on 15 April 1610, son of Abraham Perry [TAG 82:81-90, 187-95]. He is almost certainly the Isaac Perry who appeared in a few Boston records from 1632 to 1645 [GMB 3:1441-42].

3) **John Perry** had settled in Roxbury by 1632 and is almost certainly a brother of Isaac Perry mentioned just above [GMB 3:1442-43]. (William Wyman Fiske has prepared an extensive article on the Perry family and its many connections with other early New England immigrants, the first two installments of which have recently been published TAG 82:81-90, 187-95.)

4) **Richard Seymour** was baptized at Sawbridgeworth on 27 January 1604/5, son of Robert Seymour, and had settled in Hartford by 1639 [NEHGR 71:109-12]. Richard Seymour married at Sawbridgeworth on 18 August 1631 Mercy Ruscoe, probably a close relative of William Ruscoe, who came to New England in 1635 and resided at Cambridge, Hartford, Norwalk and Jamaica, Long Island.

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