



Mr J. Wardley compiled this short history of the church during the 1940's when he was the verger and churchwarden to the late Reverend George Castleton. Mr J. Wardley died in 1952; he was a keen campanologist and an active member of the Suffolk Guild of Bell ringers. This short history of the church is dedicated to Mr. James Wardley for his commitment to this church and the wider community of Dennington.

St. Mary the Virgin Parish Church. The Nave is 15th Century (perpendicular) work. The Chancel is 14th Century (decorated) work of exceptionally good quality. Notice should be taken of the capitals to the window jammes.

The carving upon these represents a combination of natural foliage with the human face in one of the south windows; you will see two owls among the foliage. The heads of all the Chancel windows are filled with reticulated Traceys and the moulding on the jammes is particularly rich and delicate. Under the opening of the Chancel arch there still remains on either side a carved Corbel, which was originally carried a 13th Century (early English) arch.

The carving is composed of conventional foliage which characterises the early English period, consisting of long carving stalls terminating in trefoils the general character of which is invariable of this example of "Early English" foliage and should be compared with decorated carving in the Chancel windows. Similar tapered Corbels, but on a larger scale exists at Ely Cathedral and also at St. Albans Abbey. Probably the present Nave and Chancel take the place of a complete building of the 13th Century or "Early English period" The Chancel screen has been cut down, the panels containing coloured and gilded shields are probably the lower portions of the doors separating the Chancel from the Nave.

The Chantry Altars no longer exist but in the Chapel North a Piscina remains and in the South Chapel both in the Piscinas an image bracket "The Poppy Head" pew ends are 15th Century work beautifully executed in a great variety of designs. As a whole are perhaps unsurpassed by any other Parish Church. The continuous leaf wrapped around a central curve, on the back of some of the pews is indicative of Tudor work. The design and ornaments of the pulpit accord with work executed during the time of Charles 1st and Oliver Cromwell, It has been painted and grained but an examination of the inside reveals the old oak.

There are a few box-pews in 17th Century panelling. TOMBS. In the South side wall of the South Chapel is a window recess and tomb appertaining to the end of the 15th Century, the tomb of William lord Bardolph who died on the 6th June 19 King Henry vii 1441. Joan his wife died on the feast of St. Gregory the pope 12th March 25th Henry vi 1444. Sir William Phelip successor of John Phelip who served with distinction under Henry v in France, married Joan, daughter of Thomas Lord Bardolph and became Lord Bardolph in her right, (This Thomas was in the insurrection in the time of King Henry iv and which was carried on by Thomas Earl Marshall and Nottingham and Richard Scrope Archbishop York).



William Lord Bardolph was chamberlain to King Henry VI; he left only one daughter, Elizabeth, married to John Viscount Beaumont, who was slain in a battle near Northampton fighting by the side of Henry VI, July 10th 1460, and was succeeded by his son William who was attained in 1461. Until the end of the 13th Century tombstones consisted of the flat lid of the stone coffin, set at the floor level within a niche in the wall. The upper side was carved, usually with a poliated cross of varying design. Sometimes with an effigy in high or low relief. About the beginning of the 14th Century the table or alter-tomb came into fashion; the sides of these were divided into panels containing tracery, to about the middle of the century it became the custom to form each alternative panel as a niche in each of which a small stone figure was placed, termed as a "weeper". Upon the top of the tomb lay the effigy of the person or persons; to whose memory was erected.

Shortly after the subsidence of the Black Plague "which occurred in the middle of the century" a number of factories were established in Derbyshire, Nottingham and Yorkshire, in which table-tombs and effigies were constructed of alabaster with great skill and minute detail. Each establishment worked to its own particular designs. This class of work continued for more than one hundred years. Lord Bardolph's monument is a good example of a table-tomb, the usual shields do not appear in the panels. Most probably his arms were blazoned on painted shields now obliterated apparently the niches are not deep enough to hold "weepers".

The effigies upon the tomb are made of clear alabaster, which, where thin, is semi transparent. The lady represented upon this monument wears the "kirtle" and under gown with flowing skirt close bodice and tight sleeves closely buttoned to the wrist. Upon the under side of the arm over this is the "cote-hardie" a garment peculiar to the 14th and 15th centuries, the principal feature lies in its being cut away from the armpit to the hip to show the kirtle beneath. Over all is the mantle open in front and secured by a cordon fastened by a jewelled "febula" and over each shoulder around the neck is a collar of small "esses" she wears a mited head dress (A fashion extending from the time of Henry iv to that of Edward iv when it was superseded by the steeple head dress). The hair is confined by a "caul" (or net) of gold thread and the veil falling behind her coronet. Around the waist is a narrow "baudrick" which like the narrow "esses" necklace was, at this period frequently worn by the ladies on imitation of the knights.

The head cushion is supported by angels, a usual feature in alabaster table-tombs. The knight is coated in armour of the period. Until the time of Edward ii and iii that is throughout the greater part of the 14th century, chain mail was reinforced piece by piece with plate armour, and during the first half of the following century the chain armour was gradually

abandoned. By the time of Richard iii under the influence of the war of the Roses the most perfect plate armour was developed one that is intended to be used single handed but having a pommel sufficiently long enough to allow a grip with both hands if occasion arose. On the neck is the "esses" collar, the badge of the Lancastrians, first used by John of Gaunt. The Eagle and the Dragon at the feet of the effigies are exceptional usually a hound or two puppies are represented at the feet of the lady, and a Lion under those of the Knight. A curious feature of the time is representation of fingernails upon the end lames of the gauntlets.

Another remarkable detail is the "gads" or "gadlings" raised knobs upon the knuckles of the gauntlets introduced during the reign of Edward iii. The Bardolph wears the bassinet the fighting helmet around which is the orle "a padded wreath of velvet enriched with strings of pearls. This in its original purpose was intended as a cushion to support the tilting helm which was worn over the bassinet in the tourneys. The fighting helmet was usually provided with a visor either removable or fixed on pivots but this is seldom shown in effigy. The Knights head rests as usual upon the tilting helm which is of special interest as exhibiting a particular type of plume, the "panache" composed of a stiff bunch of upright feathers.

In this case on circled by a coronet below which is seen the tasselled mantling. Around his waist is the "bodice" composed of square or oblong brooches of goldsmith's work linked together. His sword is of the bastard type of final defence in a personal encounter. Attention is called to the original colour and gilding which remains upon the monument. The mural monument to Sir Thomas Rous of Dennington is a typical example. As to both design and custom of the James I period over the vestry is a room constructed for the church "watcher" The "esses collar". The meaning of the esses is not known but they are supposed to represent the "world service".

By Robert C.T.Wardley.

