



All Saints: Stripping of the Altars

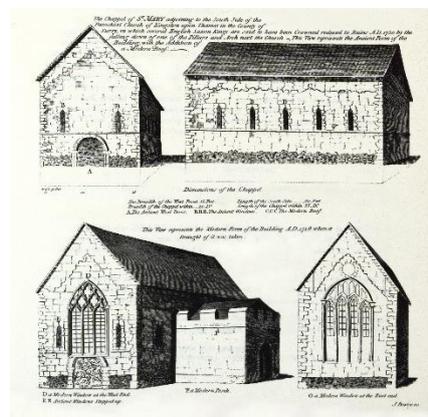
David Robinson

Imagine that you are travelling by road from London to Kingston five hundred years ago, in 1517. You enter the parish at Kingston Vale. You climb Kingston Hill, and then, as you come down the hill you see the small town, with its timber-framed buildings dominated by the stone tower and spire of this church at its heart. As you approach the town, the first building of any significance you see is the chapel of St Mary Magdalene, endowed by Edward and John Lovekyn two centuries earlier for priests to say masses for their souls and for the souls of their benefactors.



Lovekyn Chapel

You then continue down the ribbon development that is now Old London Road and into the body of the town. Bearing left at Church Street you enter the market place. You leave your possessions at an inn, and you come to this church to give thanks for your safe arrival. It is generally similar in its size and shape to the church we see today, except that the historic chapel of St Mary still stands by the south door.



St Mary's Chapel



If you enter by the west door, you are in a colourful building, with altars, statues and images, and directly in front of you under the tower is a large screen which carries carved images of Christ on the Cross, flanked by the Virgin Mary and Saint John. Above this, there is a Doom painting, showing on one side the blessed souls, saved by Christ's death, being escorted by Michael and his angels to Heaven, and on the other side the damned, being led away by devils to Hell. The heart of the church is beyond this, at the east end, with its High Altar richly adorned for the celebration of Mass, the focal act of worship.

Imagine now that you are miraculously enabled to take the same journey one century later, in 1617. You enter the parish at the same place and come over Kingston Hill. You see the church tower and spire as you did a century earlier. You reach the built-up area, and the Lovekyn chapel is still the first building you come to. But now the priests have gone, and it's the schoolroom of Kingston's grammar school. You enter the town. Many of the houses have been rebuilt and enlarged, but it is recognisably the same collection of timber-framed buildings you had seen a century earlier. You see that the church is externally much as it had been back in 1517. Then you enter. The screen and the Doom have gone. The images and paintings have gone. There are texts from scripture on the walls. The focus of the church is now the nave, with its pulpit and reading desk, and seating, because the main services now are Morning and Evening Prayer, with lengthy sermons.

Why is everything so changed?

What took place in the century between 1517 and 1617 was the religious revolution we call the Reformation. I am not intending tonight to give a history of the Reformation in England. What I want to do is to bring to life, if I can, All Saints church as it was in the early sixteenth century, before the great changes, and then the contrasting picture afterwards, and only briefly to explain how and why these changes took place.

Before I return to the early sixteenth century, I'd like to say a little about how we know what the church would have looked like so long ago. We don't have pictures, but we are very fortunate that we have, now in Kingston History Centre, a volume of the churchwardens' accounts from 1503 to 1538. These list the receipts and expenditure of the churchwardens, who were responsible for work in the church, especially repairs and maintenance. There were many things, however, that didn't pass through their books. If an individual, or a group, gave a statue, or funded some work, or if an object didn't need repair, there was no need to record it. However, we have two other important sources. One is the wills of people who left things to the church. In particular, most testators left money for lights to burn before the statues and pictures of the saints, and this gives us a good impression of just how many of them there were in the church. The other important source is an inventory of church vestments and ornaments used in worship. This was in fact compiled just at the point at which the reformers were planning to get rid of them. Beyond that, we have inevitably sometimes to depend on knowing what we would expect to find in a large late medieval town church—what we can still see elsewhere or read about, and to assume with a fair degree of certainty that they would also be found here. That is the case with the Doom painting I mentioned. Nearly every church had this painted over the chancel arch, and a major church like Kingston would certainly have had one. But we have no direct evidence. However, most of what I will be saying will be taken from records relating specifically to All Saints.



To return to the church in 1517, or perhaps more generally the period between about 1500 and 1540. As I've said, if you were here in the nave, the dominant feature would be the rood screen. This was a wooden screen. The lower part was panelled but the upper part was open so that the congregation could see through it to the high altar. The screen was topped by the rood loft, a sort of gallery dominated, as I said, by statues of Christ on the Cross with the Virgin Mary and Saint John on either side. The churchwardens spent at least £30 in 1525-6 on joiner's and other work on the rood loft. This sounds like a major reconstruction, and we can understand the possible scale of the work when we realise that the loft was wide enough and strong enough to hold an organ and singers. There may also have been an altar on it. In the 1530s there was further expenditure on the rood loft figures: 22d to Palmer for ironwork to set up Mary and John; 40s to William Russel for 'gilding of Our Lady in the high rood loft'; and 12d to him for 'painting the base of Our Lady'.

Above the rood, as I have said, almost certainly our view would be dominated by a large doom painting on the wall above. The east and west tower arches were lower until the Victorian restoration—they were the same height as the north and south arches still are—so there would have been a great deal of room for an impressive painting, showing God at the top, and the angels and devils dividing humankind into the blessed and the damned—but of course as you looked at this threatening picture your eyes were also drawn to the figure below of the crucified Christ dying to save sinners.

When we recovered from this dramatic scene, and looked around, we would be struck by the large number of altars, statues and pictures, with candles and tapers lighting them and generating pools of light around the church. When Clement Mylam died in 1496 he left his body to be buried in the Holy Trinity chapel by the wall. That is the chapel on the north side of the church, which is now the East Surrey Memorial Chapel.



Holy Trinity Chapel

He left 12d each for Our Lady Light, our Lady Light of Pity, the Light of Comfort on the rood screen, St James's Light, Saint Katherine's Light, and Saint Christopher's Light, 6d to Saint Sythe's Light, and 4d to Saint Anthony's Light. Richard Dyer, dying in 1514, directed that his body was to be buried before Saint Erasmus, martyr; Alice Nicholl, dying in the following year, left 1lb (pound) of wax to the light of the Three Kings of Cologne—these were the three kings, or wise men, of the Epiphany story,



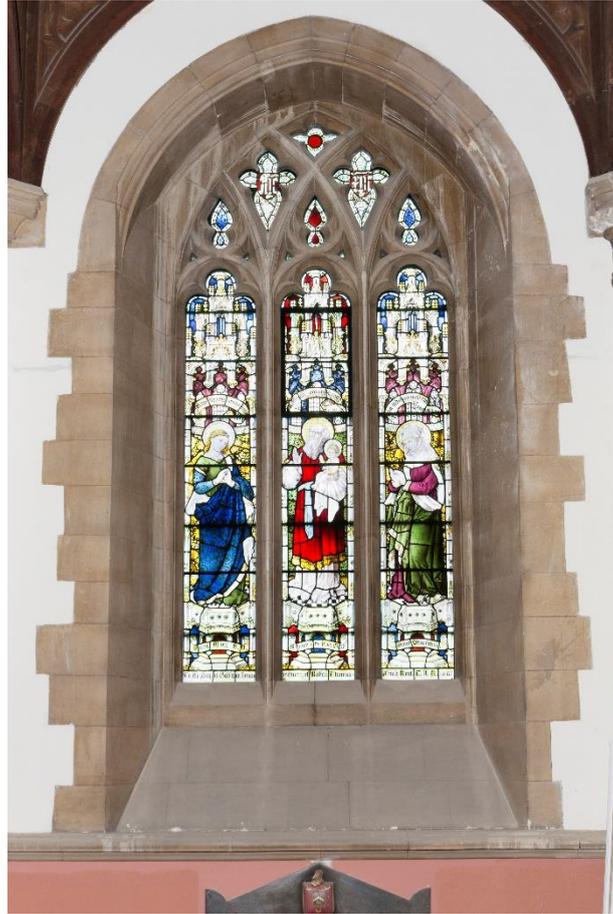
whose relics are in Cologne cathedral—and one lb for St Anne's light. One of the interesting things about these saints is that they are not for the most part the famous saints you might expect, such as the apostles and Evangelists. They are saints who were popular at the time, and in some cases particularly attractive to specific groups of people. St Sithe, or St Zita, for example, one of the saints Clement Mylam left money for, had not even been formally canonised, but the cult of this thirteenth-century serving maid of Lucca in Italy spread informally throughout Europe for housewives and servants, especially when they lost their keys, and also for people in danger from rivers and in crossing bridges. Saint Christopher, to whose light Mylam also left a bequest, was of course famously the patron saint of travellers. It may be significant that Clement Mylam was also a benefactor of Kingston Bridge. Saint Anthony was popular as a healer of people and animals. Saint Erasmus, a third-century bishop, was patron of sailors and of children and others suffering from colic. Saint Blaise is not mentioned by these testators, but his picture in the south transept, with his trademark wool comb, is our only remaining piece of evidence for this devotion to the saints.



St Blaise

The reason why an individual saint might be given a range of varied responsibilities was usually linked to miracles they performed in their lives or to the manner of their martyrdom. In the case of St Blaise, he was believed at one stage of his life to have hidden in a cave and during that time to have blessed sick and wounded animals. He was said to have healed a boy who was on the point of death with a fishbone in his throat, and he was believed to have been torn with wool combs before being executed. Hence, he was a patron saint of wool combers and sufferers from throat disease, and water with his blessing was given to sick cattle.

This array of statues, no doubt highly coloured and adorned, and paintings, would have made a really colourful effect. The walls of the church would have been coloured and might well themselves have carried pictures of Bible stories and stories of the saints. There would almost certainly have been stained glass in some, at least, of the windows. The best impression of what these windows may have looked like is the windows of the south aisle, the figures largely in white and yellow glass, with robes of red and blue.



South Aisle stained glass window

Although these windows are Victorian, they are in the style of the later middle ages, the period when our windows would have been most likely to have acquired stained glass.

The floor was tiled, and almost every year the churchwardens bought paving tiles, together with sand and lime, to repair some part of it.



Medieval floor tiles



East of the tower there were the three, or even four 'chancels'. The 'high chancel' is the one you see directly through the tower arch. To the south—right as you look at it—was St James's Chancel, with the Skerne chantry. The Holy Trinity chapel on the north side was often called the Trinity chancel. There are also references to St Katherine's chancel. Its location is not known, but perhaps it was to the south of St James's chancel, where we now have the cafe.



East end ('high chancel') and St James's Chancel



Trinity Chancel and the possible location of St Katherine's



There may well have been other altars in the church. Next to the door leading up to the tower, just outside the Holy Trinity chapel, there is a piscina—a stoup for washing the communion vessels—which suggests that there was an altar nearby. And transepts and aisles, such as we have here, were often built as much to house additional altars as to hold increased numbers of people.



Piscina

The main altars were richly furnished. The inventory I referred to earlier records altar hangings of crimson velvet embroidered with angels; of green damask—a mixture of wool and silk, with a curtain of green silk, a frontal of white damask with flowers. The document is damaged, but there appear to be references to at least two and perhaps four other hangings, one of 'Bruges' satin panelled with white and red.

There were also at least two crosses of copper, but perhaps made to look as if they were of richer metal. In 1509 the churchwardens paid 7s for gilding and making the copper cross, and in 1535 a goldsmith was paid 6s 8d for mending the best cross. There were four standard candlesticks and four small ones. These were described in the inventory as being of 'latten'—a material similar to brass—but in 1516 a silver candlestick was mended. The altars themselves would have been of stone, symbolising the sacrifice of the Mass. There were four chalices and pattens of silver and gilt for the wine and bread at Mass; a silver chrismatory, which was a container for the blessed oil used at baptisms, confirmations and holy unction; a holy water bowl of latten, and a censer made of the same material. These items needed to be kept secure. The churchwardens paid 10d for a lock for 'the little cupboard that the chrismatory standeth in'. There was also a large amount of altar linen. In 1508, for example, 4d was paid for washing of 17 pieces of altar cloths and towels.

Just as an aside, I'll remind those of you who are too young to remember the pre-decimal currency, that 12 pence made a shilling, and 20 shillings made a pound. But we have to remember that at this time a penny was worth a great deal. A skilled craftsman would receive only a few pence a day.



During the Sunday High Mass, the effect of the rich altar hangings would have been enhanced by the similarly rich vestments worn by the clergy. The inventory lists ten 'suits' of vestments. These were presumably sets of vestments for the clergy filling the roles of priest, deacon and subdeacon at the Mass. There are also eight 'vestments', which probably means chasubles without the robes of the other clergy. These were sumptuously ornamented. The orphreys which are referred to are the bands of design which stand out against the basic material of the garment. The quality of English needlework—opus Anglicanum—was famous throughout Europe in the Middle Ages. Just visualise: a suit of white damask, the orphreys of red satin; a vestment of green damask with flowers, the orphreys red damask set with Jesus; a vestment of black damask, the orphreys of crimson velvet. There was also an old suit of silk, the ground powdered with dragons, and another old suit of silk with swans. Perhaps these were particularly gorgeous vestments that had seen much use and which nobody wanted to dispose of. There were also ten copes, primarily for use at services other than the Mass, but perhaps also worn by assistant clergy at Mass: one of blue silk powdered with flowers; two of crimson velvet, with orphreys of angels embroidered; and a cope and suit of silk, the ground blue and red with flowers of gold. There were also amices, worn at the neck, with their decorated bands called apparels, and underneath the priest wore the basic garment, the alb.

These all needed looking after. 7s 10d was paid for lining of the blue velvet cope, and there are several references to expenditure on mending the vestments and copes. Seven shillings to an embroider--possibly a London specialist—and on another occasion 2s 4d to John Standon's wife, presumably a local woman. In 1531 the churchwardens paid for mending no fewer than 17 albs and 16 amices. On at least one occasion the church made a small amount of income when the best cope was lent to the abbot of Hyde Abbey, Winchester, for a service at Esher. Perhaps this was an ordination service, or maybe it was a service in the bishop's chapel when the abbot wanted to make a good impression, and he paid 10d for the privilege.

Having so many sets of vestments was not excessive, because there would have been quite a body of priests attached to the church. In 1502 Robert Somerby, the vicar, made his will. He wanted a monthly Mass for the first year after his death at which all the priests belonging to the church were to be present. Placebo, dirige, and lauds were to be distinctly sung 'on the night' (Placebo was the first word of the office of Vespers, and Dirige (which is the origin of our word, 'dirge') was the opening word of the office of Mattins). On the morrow there were to be said the principal Requiem Mass, the mass of the day, mass of our Lady, of the Trinity, of the Holy Ghost, and of the Five Wounds of Christ, 'if there be priests of the church to do the same'. And after these masses the priests were 'to go to the hearse and there to say the psalm De Profundis (Out of the deep have I cried unto thee, O Lord), with suffrages thereunto', for his soul and the souls of all his friends. This suggests that Somerby had reason to believe that there were likely to be at least six priests attached to the church. These would have included the chantry priest endowed by the Skerne family to say mass in St James's chancel before the Skerne tomb—with the memorial brass that has survived, now attached to the north-east tower arch—and also the priest employed by the Fraternity of the Holy Trinity.



Skerne Brass

The Holy Trinity chapel had been built for this Fraternity which was founded by Robert Bardsey in 1477. It was a society of local men and women partly to have masses said for their souls, partly for sociable events, and partly for mutual support and assistance in times of difficulty. The priest employed by the Fraternity would say masses in the chapel for the living and the deceased brothers and sisters of the Fraternity. There was a daily Morrow Mass in the church—this was an early morning mass for people going to work, said by an endowed 'Morrow Mass priest'. Thomas Bury, dying in 1501, left land in Kingston to help support this Mass. There may well have been other priests, available if you wanted a mass said in thanks for the safe birth of your child, or for your safe arrival from a journey. Apart from their specific duties, they would be available to help with the pastoral work of the parish, and to assist at the Sunday High Mass.



Holy Trinity Chapel

So, how was this wealth of colour and sumptuous materials experienced by the townspeople when they gathered for the Sunday Mass?

At the beginning of the service, the priests solemnly blessed and exorcised salt and water and mixed them, and they, and the clerks who assisted them, processed around the church, sprinkling the congregation with this holy water. Much of the service that followed took place at the east end.



The congregation could see a certain amount through the screen, but they probably mostly said their own prayers, such as the Lord's Prayer and the rosary. It's clear from critical comments that are made in books of devotion that it was not unknown for some of them to chatter and gossip during the service. Before the Offertory, the priest, in English, called upon the people to pray for the Pope; for the bishops and clergy and especially their own priest; for the king, lords and commons; for the town authorities and all parishioners; for pilgrims and travellers, prisoners and women with child; and for the dead. He would then return to the altar, and begin the most sacred part of the service, leading up to the consecration of the elements. The people would return to their prayers, or their conversations. They would look up, and some of them might move forward to gaze through the screen, when the Sanctus bell rang and the priest said the words of consecration and held the wafer up high—the Elevation of the Host—signifying that the elements of bread and wine had become the body and blood of Jesus. Only the celebrant would communicate.

There were two other ceremonies at the Sunday High Mass that involved the laity. Just before he made his communion, the priest kissed the corporal--the white cloth on which the Host was laid--and then the lip of the chalice, and he then kissed the paxbread, a disk or tablet on which was carved or painted an emblem such as the Lamb of God or the crucifix. This was then taken by one of the ministers to the congregation outside the screen, where it was kissed by each in turn. They were careful to observe due rank and seniority. Then, at the end of the service, a loaf of bread was taken up to the altar by a householder of the parish. The priest blessed it, and it was distributed to the congregation. It was meant to be the first food you tasted on Sunday.

This was the 'normal' Sunday Mass. It was almost entirely in Latin, and probably not much was audible in the nave anyway. What mattered was the action.

At certain times of year the Mass was enhanced by further rituals. Holy Week and Easter were the high point of the ritual year. Lent was a time of bareness, with a painted veil hanging over the figure of Christ on the Rood Screen, but on Palm Sunday, the church sprang to life. After the sprinkling of holy water, the story of Christ's entry into Jerusalem was read from St John's Gospel. The priest blessed flowers and green branches, which were called palms, but were usually yew, box or willow. The clergy and people then processed outside, and moved to a large cross erected in the churchyard, normally on the north side of the church at its east end, where the choir sang anthems telling the story of Palm Sunday. After further rituals, which are described in detail in Eamon Duffy's book, *The Stripping of the Altars*, and the singing of 'Gloria Laus et Honor' (All Glory Laud and Honour) the procession returned to the church. The veil which had hidden the figure of Christ throughout Lent was drawn up on pulleys. Mass continued, but at the Gospel, the whole of the Passion story from St Matthew's Gospel was sung up on the rood loft, as Duffy puts it, 'in churches which had the resources', by three clerks, Jesus by a bass, the narrator by a tenor, and the words of the crowd by an alto. What is particularly exciting for us is that the churchwardens' accounts show that All Saints was a church which did have the resources to sing the dramatised Gospel. We know this because there are regular references to expenditure on ale provided on Palm Sunday at the singing of the Passion. In 1515 this is specifically for 'drink into the rood loft', and in 1537 the recipients are identified as priests: 'bread and ale for the priests upon palm sunday'. Since the church had men of this musical ability, it is reasonable to suppose that their singing also contributed to the normal Sunday Mass, and it's certainly possible that the choir of a large town church like this one may not have been restricted to plainsong, but may have sung polyphonic music as well.



After Palm Sunday, Holy Week was penitential, reaching its emotionally highest, or lowest, point on Good Friday, when no Mass was celebrated, the Passion according to St John was read, a cross was brought into church, and clergy and people crept barefoot and on their knees to kiss the foot of the cross. At the end of the liturgy the priest put off his Mass vestments and, barefoot and wearing his surplice, took the Host consecrated the previous day, wrapped it in linen cloths and took it to the north side of the chancel where a sepulchre, probably a small timber frame, had been erected. From then until Easter morning there was a rota of watchers at the tomb. The Easter celebrations were enhanced by reenactment of the visit of the women to the tomb. Clerks disguised as women, or at least with their tonsured heads covered, visited the tomb and were greeted by an angel saying, He is not dead, but has risen. March and April nights were cold, and the accounts include expenditure on coals, as well as bread and ale, for the watchers at the sepulchre. The Easter sepulchre was usually on the north side of the chancel, and often placed on a tomb, and it seems likely that the tomb at the east end here which now also contains a memorial to a Victorian vicar would have been used for the purpose.



Memorial to Reverend Alfred Williams

There seems also to have been an Easter Play separate from the liturgy. In 1519, the churchwardens spent 8d on a skin of parchment and for gunpowder for the play on Easter Day. The Resurrection must have been celebrated with a bang! They also spent 14d for bread and ale for 'them that made the stage at Easter and other things that belongeth to the play'. It was at Easter that the congregation made their communion—for most of them probably the only time they did so in the whole year—and they received only the bread, not the wine.

My earlier mention of the choir leads naturally into discussion of the church's organs. The earliest mention of an organ in the church is in 1509 when Thomas Sexton was paid 6s 8d for 'mending of the organs'. An organ was regularly spoken of as a 'pair of organs', so this entry, although using the plural, probably refers to a single instrument. However, there is evidence that the church did indeed have two organs: in 1527 5s was spent on 'mending of 2 pair of organs', and in the inventory of 1550 there were two organs, one of them old. In 1514, there was what must have been a major rebuild of one of the organs by a London organ builder called Passhe. The organ was taken to London by barge, and over £7 was spent. This money was raised by a special 'gathering' for the organ, which raised £6 16s 10d. This would have been a social gathering of parishioners of the sort sometimes called a 'church ale'.



The churchwardens also had to pay for mundane items such as 10½d 'for sweeping of the roof of the church and the high windows', presumably these are the clerestory windows above us, 4s to a plumber for mending the gutters, regular payments for tiling the roofs and the floors, major work on the steeple, and, on one occasion, 2d for carrying a dead horse out of the churchyard. By far the largest regular items of expenditure were in fact the bells-- bawdricks, clappers, iron work for trussing the great bell and the Sanctus bell, and much besides.

So, five centuries ago, this was the colourful church and dramatic worship of All Saints. How did things change?

This isn't the time or place for a detailed account of the great religious upheaval we call the Reformation, but I do need to sketch its progress in England briefly, because the changes in the appearance of the church, and in the nature of the worship that took place in it, reflected the beliefs of the Reformers.

This year marks the five hundredth anniversary of Martin Luther's challenge to the Papacy and to what we may call the Catholic way of doing things. This is symbolised by his fixing 95 theses, subjects for academic debate, on the church door at Wittenberg. Whether there were actually 95, and whether they were nailed to the door, stuck to it, or not fixed to it at all, remains a matter of debate, but the nature of his challenge, and its remarkable effect, both in the short and the long term, is indisputable. Luther was not the first person to challenge Catholic practices in this way. Just four years earlier, in 1513, a man had been burnt at the stake in our own market place outside here for professing the heretical teachings of the Lollards. These were followers of the fourteenth-century reformer John Wycliffe. They believed in having the Bible available in English, with no restrictions on the laity being allowed to read it. They rejected the Real Presence in the Mass and the power of the priesthood, and the use of statues and pictures. They foreshadowed the main themes of the Reformation, but there is no evidence that they were widely influential. The greater influence in Eastern and South-Eastern England was our close trading relationship with the Continent, and the resulting contact with continental reform ideas.

But England was a highly centralised country, and the changes that actually took place in religious orientation were primarily dependent on the beliefs and policies of kings, queens and their governments. Henry VIII set the ball rolling in 1533 and 1534 when, frustrated by his inability to persuade the Pope to annul his marriage with Katherine of Aragon, he broke off links with Rome and had himself declared Supreme Head on Earth of the Church of England. In itself, this didn't involve changes in doctrine or worship, but the dissolution of the monasteries, and in particular Merton priory in 1538, had an impact on Kingston because the priory took a large proportion of the tithes and other payments due to the church from the parish and was also a leading landowner in Kingston. None of this land and income came back to the church when the priory was dissolved. Its assets were sold to the highest, or the fastest, bidder. Merton priory also effectively appointed the vicar--'presented' is the technical term--and this right, too, was sold off.

Henry remained generally conservative in religion and, although he wavered between traditional Catholicism minus the Pope, and on the other hand giving some encouragement to aspects of Protestantism, relatively little changed in churches in his reign. The most striking evidence of Protestant influence was his order in 1538 for an English Bible to be put up in every parish church. This was ironic because the original translator, William Tyndale, had been executed in the Low



Countries on Henry's orders. In the same year, 1538, there was an injunction that candles were to be burnt only before the rood, the tabernacle for the host, and the Easter sepulchre, and not before statues. And an English litany was produced in 1544.

Our churchwardens' accounts end in 1538, and only begin again in 1560, so we don't have the detailed evidence we would like about Kingston's reactions to the major changes that were about to take place.

Henry had allowed his young son Edward to be educated by reformers, and when he died in 1547, the nine-year-old Edward VI and his ministers began a serious programme of Protestant reform. The different strands of the Reform movement—followers of Luther, Calvin, Zwingli and others—didn't necessarily agree among themselves, but they shared certain basic beliefs which were reflected in the furnishing of churches and the worship that took place in them. They gave priority to the Bible, to reading it and preaching from it. They varied in their interpretations of the holy communion, but most of them stressed the subjective reception of Christ by the devout believer, and they also tended to regard the service as a memorial of the Last Supper, as distinct from focus on the Real Presence in the form taught by the Roman Catholic church. Most of them opposed the invocation of saints and the use of images and pictures. They stressed the believer's direct approach to God. In particular, they rejected the doctrine of Purgatory. Prayers and masses for the dead were of no avail in helping those who had died. As a result, in 1547 Edward and his ministers abolished chantries, including not only the Lovekyn chapel on the edge of town but also Skerne's chantry in this church. They also limited the number of lights on the altar to two and required communion to be in both kinds, with communicants receiving both the bread and the wine. In the following year all images were to be destroyed. The use of candles was abolished, except presumably for lighting, and ashes and palms were no longer to be used.



In this way they struck at some of the key rituals of the medieval church. They also introduced a communion service in English, at which the congregation was encouraged to make their communion regularly. Inventories of the goods of every church were drawn up. It is this inventory that I quoted earlier. It was dated 15 March 1549, and shows that at that date the church was still fully equipped for traditional worship. Ostensibly the inventory was intended to ensure that church goods were properly accounted for, but most people probably reckoned that it was a precursor of confiscation.

Later in 1549 a completely new Prayer Book was issued, linked to an Act of Uniformity, so that it replaced the former Missals, Graduals and other service books. The Government moved carefully. The services were all in English, but the priest still wore a white alb with a vestment or cope, and the



other ministers continued to use the vestments appointed for their ministry. The clerks sang the service in English. The priest was not to communicate alone. At least some of the parishioners must communicate with him. There were also two new services—Mattins, or Morning Prayer, and Evensong, or Evening Prayer. Morning Prayer was essentially an amalgamation of the medieval morning 'hours'—Mattins, Lauds and Prime. Evening Prayer was an amalgamation of two of the evening 'hours'—Vespers and Compline. The Magnificat, the Gospel hymn from Vespers, and the Nunc Dimittis, the Gospel hymn from Compline, became parts of Evensong, as they remain to this day.

Three years later, in 1552, the Government felt strong enough to publish a second Book of Common Prayer. Now the communion was to take place not at an altar but at a table standing in the body of the church, either the nave or the chancel, and the priest was to wear a surplice—no alb, no vestment, no cope. Most strikingly, when he communicated the people, he used the words 'Take this/drink this in remembrance of me', and not 'This is my body/this is my blood'. On 28 September, a second inventory of All Saints' vestments and ornaments was taken. There were still at least four suits of vestments, five copes and another vestment. There were now two communion cups, not called chalices, and two copper crosses. The new prayerbook came into force on 1 November, and a third inventory was drawn up six months later, on 15 May 1553. There were now still two communion cups, two altar hangings, and a hearse cloth of black satin and camlet with the name of Jesus embroidered, but that is all. The richness of the former church and its worship had gone.

But then, in July, Edward died, aged only fifteen. His half-sister Mary succeeded to the throne. She was the daughter of Katherine of Aragon, and a devout Catholic. Everything went into reverse. Parishes had to reacquire the set of service books used in Catholic worship. They had to acquire a High Mass set of vestments, a cope, processional crucifix, censer, and the other appurtenances of Catholic worship that had been stripped out a year before. Some of these things may have been squirrelled away by parishioners who hoped for a reversion to the old pattern of worship, or who at least foresaw that it was possible, but many must have been destroyed or sold off for secular use. One Winchester church, for example, had sold off a hundredweight and a half of liturgical books as parchment waste, perhaps to a bookbinder, but quite probably to a gluemaker, for only nine shillings. Because our churchwardens' accounts do not survive for this period, we cannot tell how quickly and thoroughly they had executed the government's demands, let alone how willingly they had obeyed them, or whether they had taken precautionary measures, but we can probably assume that, being so close to London, they would not have been easily able to avoid the Government's eye.

And so, the worshippers in this church were subjected to a second complete change in their worship in just a few years. How did they react? Probably some members of a community so closely linked with London would have been enthused by the new ideas, but probably most parishioners, then as now, had a strong attachment to what they had grown up with—the teaching, the forms of worship, the private devotions they had learned as children and experienced throughout their lives until so recently. We have four possible pointers to Kingston people's attitudes, although none of them is unequivocal evidence. When Sir Thomas Wyatt revolted against Mary in 1554, the Kingston people removed the middle section of the bridge to delay his crossing. But loyalty to the Crown may have been more important than religious feeling. In the following year, a splendid Corpus Christi Day procession was held in Kingston, organised by Philip of Spain's spiritual counsellor. This would have enthused faithful traditionalists, but we cannot tell how many people were unresponsive. The other



two pieces of evidence are perhaps more telling. We don't have any record of a Kingston person suffering death as a heretic during Mary's reign. Of course, only the few who were really committed would be prepared to suffer a horrible death by burning, but the fact that no Kingston man or woman suffered may still have some significance. The final piece of evidence is that in 1557 Robert Hamond died. In his will he left his body to be buried in the Trinity chapel, before his seat in the chapel next to the wall. He left to the bailiffs and freemen of Kingston £6 13s 4d to set up a free grammar school. And he directed that at his burial five priests should sing Dirige and the Mass, and that shortly afterwards five priests should do the same at three other churches he was connected with. This is a clear statement of Catholic commitment, seeking the same services for his soul that previous generations had sought before him. Although it is only the will of one man, and he was of the older generation, his directions were made in the knowledge that there was a body of priests (admittedly they may not all have been on the staff here) ready, able and willing to carry out the traditional services for the dead.

But in the following year, Mary herself died. Her half-sister Elizabeth, who succeeded her, had kept her head down, and thereby kept her head on her shoulders, during Mary's reign, but as the daughter of Anne Boleyn she was identified with the Protestant cause. She started cautiously, but in 1559 her own Act of Uniformity imposed what was largely the 1552 prayer book. There were some compromises. The most significant was at the administration of the Communion, when the priest said both, this is my body/this is my blood, and Take this/Drink this in remembrance of me, combining the possibility of some form of Real Presence with the purely memorial wording preferred by Protestants.

There was some ambivalence in the early years of the new reign as to just what changes would be made in the way services were conducted, but it soon became clear that the people of Kingston would have to get rid of the furnishings and vestments they had so recently reacquired.

The churchwardens' accounts begin again in 1560, the year after the Act of Uniformity, so we can see both how they disposed of some of the items related to Catholic worship, and how they equipped this church for once-more-reformed worship. In that year, they 'received of Mr Taverner for the rood loft 45s', and in the following year William Skartcliffe paid a total of £4 16s 8d for the rood loft; presumably the two men acquired different parts of the loft. In 1563 John Brown received 2s 6d, possibly a retrospective payment, for 'taking down of the rood loft and mending the same again'—mending presumably meaning the repair of damage caused by the removal. The government did not demand the removal of rood screens, as opposed to the rood loft and its figures, and it is possible that this remained. The difference is that, instead of dividing clergy and people during the Mass, it now divided the two parts of the church by what they were used for: the nave for Morning and Evening Prayer, and the chancel for the Communion. If the screen did survive, very probably the Royal Arms would have been erected on it. This may have taken place before our accounts begin, but in 1605, after the death of Elizabeth and the accession of James I, £3 10s was paid 'for making the Kings arms'.

William Skartcliffe also gave 12d for an 'old piece of carved work against St James chancel' and the wardens received 5s for 20lbs of old brass, presumably crosses, candlesticks and censers. One of the wardens himself paid 11s for an old cope, and 10s was received for 'old books'. In 1563 40s was received for a vestment sold in London and 13s 4d for 'certain gear' sold in the church, which may



have included other items now surplus to requirements. There also seems to have been a considerable amount of reglazing carried out in these years. This may simply have reflected necessity—the amounts spent on reacquiring furniture and vestments during Mary's reign may have left little funds for routine maintenance, but it may reflect the removal of stained glass and its replacement by plain glass.

So much for destruction. What about implementation of the new requirements?

Archbishop Cranmer in 1552 seems to have hoped that the weekly Sunday Mass would be replaced by a weekly communion service, and the 1559 Book of Common Prayer continued to provide collects, epistles and gospels for each Sunday, but it seems that, having lost the drama and colour of the medieval service, the majority of the congregation largely lost interest in it. It may not have helped that, now that each individual participated in a way they had not previously done, those people who were most devout and scrupulous perhaps found that the requirement for examining their conscience on a weekly or even monthly basis was too heavy a burden compared with the annual confession before Easter communion which was the norm in the middle ages. Expenditure on wine suggests that there were still quite frequent communion services, but the pattern, here as elsewhere, would have been morning prayer, followed by the litany and a sermon, and then the first part of the communion service up to the Creed and the prayer for the church militant, followed by any baptisms. In the afternoon, there was Evening Prayer with a sermon, or the catechising of children. It seems that for most people what replaced the Mass in providing the stimulus for worship was the experience of worshipping together and experiencing directly the Scripture readings, the prayers, and in particular, at least the potential for an interesting sermon.

As regards the communion, altars were again, as in Edward's reign, replaced by tables. In 1561 four bushels of lime were bought for 20d 'to make the place where the altar stood'. Presumably this was to repair damage caused when the stone altar was demolished. In 1567 4s 6d was spent on 'making the communion tables'. Apparently four were made, two for the High Chancel, one for St James's chancel and one for Trinity chancel. No doubt the high chancel was used when a large attendance was expected, for example at Easter, when it would have made sense to have two tables, presumably abutting lengthwise. Probably the use of three chancels for communion did not continue for very long.

The new pattern of worship placed the focus of the church on the pulpit and reading desk for the minister, and a desk for the clerk, who led the congregational responses.



Pulpit



The first we hear of any of this is in 1561 when 9d was paid for 15 ft of board 'to make the place for the clerk to read in'. There may well have already been a pulpit in the church before the Reformation, although it is not mentioned in the churchwardens' accounts. There was certainly one by 1585, when it was moved 'to the north-west pillar that beareth up the steeple', a good position to address the congregation in the nave. We don't know where it was moved from. By this time it was enhanced by an hour-glass in an iron frame to record the passing of time during the sermon. Later we hear of there being a cushion in the pulpit, probably to rest the Bible on rather than for the minister but we can't be sure.

To listen to the word you needed somewhere to sit. There are only a couple of references to seats before the Reformation, but standing or kneeling was not a desirable or appropriate posture for a Reformed service which might last an hour and a half and more, and in which you were not free to move about. There are only a few references to seats in the 1560s and 1570s, but there must in fact have been seats for most people by 1585, because in that year there was a meeting in the church at which it was ordered 'that the seats in the church shall be altered and the parishioners to be placed in order in their degrees and callings'. These would probably have been high-backed pews with doors, giving each family, or at least the better-off families, a personal space to occupy during the service.

The Reformers got rid of visual images, because they might become objects of devotion in their own right. Instead they were focused on the word, and in 1567 Mr Baynard was paid 6s 8d for 'setting up the scriptures in the high chancel', with an additional 6d for faggots and coals to dry his work. A man called Widoes was paid 6d for brushing the white lime of the scriptures in the middle aisle, which I would take to imply that there were texts here in the nave.

New prayer books, of course, needed to be purchased. The first purchases of the 1559 Book of Common Prayer no doubt preceded the earliest of the surviving post-Reformation accounts, but in 1562 the churchwardens spent 5s 6d for 'a new service book for the vicar'. The minister was now required to wear a surplice at communion, as he did at Morning and Evening Prayer, and in 1562 11s 6d was paid for 6 ells of Holland cloth for a new surplice for the vicar and 3s 4d for making it. Purchases of prayer books and the purchase, repair and washing of surplices become regular items in the accounts.

There was initially some uncertainty as to the role of music in the new order of things. The form of music preferred by the reformers was strictly Biblical-- metrical versions of the psalms. These were translations of the psalms into simple verse forms. At their best we have the version of psalm 100, 'All people that on earth do dwell'. At a less inspired level, we have psalm 16, referring to idolators: 'They shall heape sorrows on their heads, which runne as they were mad: to offer to the Idols gods; alas it is too bad.' It may reflect local enthusiasm that 10d was paid as early as 1560 for a book of psalms for the clerk, and in 1568 6d for a psalter book for the choir. There clearly was still a choir at this date, and even though there was no extended Palm Sunday ritual requiring their refreshment, this was still provided. It was also supplied at other times—on Christmas Day 1561, 12d was paid for wine, 'that is to say 2 quarts of Malvesey' for the choir. In 1568 coals were provided for the choir in cold weather. One of the choirmen, Percival Green, received additional payments. He may have undertaken the clerk's responsibility for leading the congregation in singing the psalms. Green seems to have left the town in 1580, and there is no mention after that date of music in the church.



There was certainly an organ in the church in the mid-1560s. Presumably it had remained from the end of Mary's reign. We don't know whether it was one of the earlier two that had survived, or whether a new one was acquired under Mary. In 1565 payments were made for new leathering of the bellows for the organs---the plural form, but presumably there was just the one organ--, and a case for the organs with lock and key. Three years later 3d was paid for mending the wind of the organ, and further payments were made in the next two years. But after 1570 there is no further mention of the organ, until in 1597 the churchwardens received 4s for the 'organs' of the church, presumably scrap value.

Clearly a lot was still happening which left no trace in the churchwardens' accounts, but without always knowing just what was done at any particular date we can see that by the 1580s All Saints had been equipped for reformed worship, centred on the ministry of the word, on the pulpit and reading desk in the nave, and with texts replacing paintings on the walls.

How did local people react to this? Probably most of the older generation regretted the loss, and indeed the deliberate destruction, of so much that had given their faith its expression. In particular, the transition from a world in which the living felt very directly linked to the dead in their religious practices, praying for them and hoping for their prayers, was replaced by a world in which the moment of death was seen as, in effect, a final judgment on the dead person. There is no real evidence of opposition to the changes—very few Kingston people were reported as recusants, people who refused to attend worship. What does seem to have happened is that some elements in the town embraced partisans of more radical reform. The new services, although in many ways a sharp contrast with the Mass, were seen by some people as retaining much too much of the old religion. The communion service retained two ancient hymns, the Gloria and the Sanctus. Morning and Evening Prayer remained very much based on the pattern of the medieval hours, and retained the responses between minister and people. Radical reformers wanted a simple service of Scripture readings, extemporary prayer, and sermon. The minister still wore the surplice, which radicals denounced as a 'rag of Popery'. The sign of the cross was still used at baptisms, and the ring at weddings. Radicals saw these as relics of Catholicism. In the 1580s Kingston came under the influence of a seriously radical preacher, John Udall, who was appointed a lecturer, probably to preach at additional services here. His preaching clearly divided the town. He had strong supporters, but also strong opponents. His story, although interesting in itself, would be a digression from my theme tonight, which is the appearance of the church. Suffice it to say that, when he was prevented by the bishop of Winchester from preaching here, he became an underground controversialist and narrowly escaped death for high treason when his attacks on the state of the Church of England became attacks on the Queen who governed it.

The churchwardens' accounts reveal nothing of this drama. Whatever excitements may have been going on, they were continuing with their duty of keeping the church watertight and clean, and repairing and replacing what was needed for worship. Whatever the Puritans, as the radicals were now being called, thought about the wearing of the surplice, the churchwardens paid for new ones when they were needed. Whatever the Puritans thought about the prayer book, the churchwardens paid 8s for a new one in 1575, and for further books in 1593, 1598 and 1610. The Puritans objected to kneeling to take communion, but the churchwardens paid for mats and hassocks. These were of course legal requirements, which the churchwardens had to obey whatever their private opinions or the opinions of the congregation. Interestingly they continued to acquire hassocks to kneel on at



the communion and at the font in the 1630s, by which time the vicar was Edmund Staunton, a Puritan who took a leading part in the revolutionary changes in the Church of England during and after the Civil War.



Staunton Brass

From about 1610, there seems to have been a conscious policy of repair and enhancement of the church. In the middle of the decade there was a set of major repairs, these included expenditure on the font: 8s 1d for mending it, 8s for colouring it, and 15s for the font cover, together with other items such as lead and plumber's work, and also a pulley, which may have been needed to raise and lower the cover. The pulpit was also coloured. In 1624-5 Thomas Preston, painter, was paid for 21 compartments with verses—presumably verses of scripture—for blueing the arches of the church and chancel and for colouring the three church doors in oil. He was also paid 2s 8d for blueing the eight upper windows in the middle aisle, that is, the clerestory windows above us. I cannot find any meaning of 'blueing' other than colouring blue. Perhaps this was a tinted version of whitewash. This was part of major work on the steeple, repairs to the church and 'beautifying thereof', costing £60.

Work was always now being needed on seats. Leading residents might have special provision made for them, and sometimes paid for by them. In 1614 the churchwardens paid 31s 10d for making or altering a seat in the church for Lady St John, to which she paid 10s. Somewhat later they enlarged Sir Anthony Brown's seat for 6s, presumably to accommodate more members of his family, friends or servants. The town bailiffs, and the 'fifteens', who were the Councillors, had their own seats, and there was a seat where the women sat to be church'd—the service of thanksgiving after childbirth. There was also 'a form for the children to stand on to answer the minister'—presumably when he tested their knowledge of the catechism on a Sunday afternoon.

By this time more accommodation was needed in the church. This was met by erecting galleries. In 1618 the town bailiffs and freemen erected a gallery on the south side of the nave, with a gift of 40 marks (£26 13s 4d) from Edward Buckland. In 1621 Roger Pope, gentleman, provided a west gallery, and in 1633 an extension to the south gallery was provided by Mark Snelling, a Kingston-born man who had become an alderman of London. We can still see his memorial on the north side of the chancel, and it records that he gave £25 for the erection of a gallery and £25 more for a carpet and a silver cup for the communion table.



Snelling Memorial

The 'carpet' was probably a covering for the table. These are typical of items that didn't pass through the churchwardens' accounts, except that in 1621 they paid a joiner to come from London and give his opinion on making the gallery and they also had to pay 'for making clean the seats in the church when the gallery was made'. Incidentally, Mark Snelling's memorial also records gifts of bread, and coals before and after Christmas, to the poor.

Some of the wardens' duties remained unchanged. They still needed to ensure that the gutters were cleaned, and to pay for roof tiles and floor tiles. They paid to have dogs whipped out of the church. They still paid out large sums for the bells. Indeed, Elizabeth was so frequent a visitor to Surrey that there are constant payments to the ringers when she passed through the town or was in the vicinity.

So, in the church of the 1620s and 1630s, with its seats and its galleries, the attention of the congregation is focused on the pulpit and reading desk in the nave, very different from the church of a century earlier when the focus of attention was the altar, at the east end of the chancel.

At the beginning, I drew the contrast between All Saints in 1517 and a century later. Without being tied to the specific years 1517 and 1617, perhaps we can see a contrast between, on the one hand, the period 1500-1540, which was the eve of major changes that were carried out largely at the will of the Royal government, and, on the other hand, a century later, 1600-1640, which was again the eve of major changes—this time, though, carried out at the cost of Civil War against the Royal government.

But there is a more potent message, or perhaps there are two related messages. The first is that a building like this one is able to live with and, in a sense, absorb change while remaining almost unchanged in its essential structure. The arcades, the tower, the walls and windows, the timber roofs and the tiled floor, remained structurally the same, even though the effect on the visitor, and even more on the worshipper, was greatly changed. And we can see this as a symbol of the fact that



there was continuity as well as contrast in the worship. The style, and the 'feel', of the worship was very different, and its primary focus had moved from the Mass to Morning and Evening Prayer. But still, the communion service retained much of the structure of the pre-Reformation service, and Morning and Evening Prayer were based on the medieval morning hours of Mattins and Lauds and the evening hours of Vespers and Compline.

Beyond that, of course, is the fundamental fact that, through all the changes, worship, in 1617, as in 1517, remained focused on the Christian revelation of God.



All Saints nave, towards the west door

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The main source for this talk is the churchwardens' accounts which are part of the Kingston Borough Archive, held by Kingston History Centre, Guildhall, Kingston upon Thames. Typescript copies are accessible on open shelves at the Centre. The 1549 inventory is printed in *Surrey Archaeological Collections*, xxiv. The 1552 and 1553 inventories are printed in *Surrey Archaeological Collections*, iv. Many extracts from the accounts, together with the 1552 and 1553 inventories, are printed in A. Heales, *The Early History of the Church of Kingston upon Thames, with the History of the Free Chapel of St. Mary Magdalene, Kingston* (London, 1883). The general background is largely contained in E. Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars* (New Haven and London, 1992) and H. Davies, *Worship and Theology in England, from Cranmer to Baxter and Fox, 1534-1690* (Grand Rapids, MI, and Cambridge, UK, 1996).