

BISHOP'S STORTFORD



BISHOP'S STORTFORD is in the extreme E. of the county and on the Essex border. It is an ancient town, deriving its name from the ford over the river Stort, and from the fact that William I. gave the town to Maurice, Bishop of London.

It is famous for its Grammar School, at which the late Cecil Rhodes, a native of the town, was educated.

The site of Waytemore Castle, built by William I., is on a mound near the road to Hockeril, where a low, wide flint wall is partly surrounded by a moat.

The church of St. Michael on Windhill is Perp.; it was restored in 1859. There was a former church on the same site; the present structure dates from say 1420-40. The nave has six bays; the tower is pinnacled and has a ring of ten fine bells. Chauncy's book has an interesting paragraph about this church.

“Three Gylds and a Chantry were founded in this church; the Gyld of St. Mary; the Gyld of St. Michael; and the Gyld of St. John Baptist; to which, An. 1476, Elizabeth Spycere gave Legacies, viz., to the two former 13s. 4d. a piece, to the last 40s.

These Saints had their altars, and St. Michael his Tabernacle, on which much Cost had been bestowed; but the Chantry was founded in the time of Richard III. and the Settlement thereof cost much Money.” Chancel and nave are separated by a screen of carved oak; the font (Norman) was discovered during the restoration of the church; there is a piscina in the S. aisle.

The clerestory was added and the chancel restored in 1884; on the chancel floor is a brass to Lady Margaret Denny (d. 1648), “a maid of honour in ordinary for five years to Queen Elizabeth of blessed memory”.

There is also a memorial to Sir George Duckett, Bart. (d. 1822), who increased the facilities for the navigation of the Stort, which is now navigable by barges to the town. A cattle sale is held every Thursday, which is market-day.

The trade in malt is still very large. We read that in old times a cross was erected on each of the four roads leading from the town. The main thoroughfares are still in the form of a cross; going down Windhill the visitor will find a bridge over the Stort before him, and a main street on either side. The town can boast several of the finest old inns in Herts