

The Church of St Mary-the-Virgin, Horsell, Surrey

by R. J. BOYTON

Although Horsell must have formed part of the land at 'Pyrainford' (later Pyrford Manor) which consisted of 16 hides granted by King Eadwig to his friend Eadrig in A.D. 956, it is not referred to by name until the early thirteenth century. The stream known as the Horsell bourne formed part of the northern boundary of this land, a boundary that had existed as early as A.D. 675, separating the property granted about that year to the newly founded Abbey at Chertsey, from lands to the south.¹

King Harold was in possession of Pyrford Manor at the time of the Norman invasion, but on being seized by William the Conqueror it was granted in part (about 8 hides) to the Abbey of Westminster in exchange for Windsor. William retained 3 hides (between 300 and 360 acres) of this land within the 'Forest of Windsor' possibly as a nursery for game. This would probably include the wooded land of Woodham and north-east Horsell. The Domesday Survey (1086) confirms the Abbey's possession of the Manor in part at least, for in the following year William granted to the Abbey the remainder of the Manor, being 8 hides still in his possession, with certain rights and privileges. It was on the strength of this grant that in 1279 the Abbot claimed these rights in his 'Manors of Piriford and Horshull'.² The Manor was made up of the four tithings of Pyrford, Horsell, Sithwood and Woodham, and came within the Hundred of Godley. Sithwood formed the western part of Horsell.

It is not possible to say whether the Abbey of Westminster gave the authority for the erection of chapels in Horsell and Pyrford (1140-1160), being within their Manor, to tend the spiritual needs of small communities developing there. The right to appoint a curate was certainly theirs as in 1258 the Abbey sold the advowsons of these two chapels to the Priory of Newark (founded in 1200) for forty marks (£26. 67). A few years earlier, in 1237, a dispute had arisen between Chertsey Abbey and Newark Priory concerning the tithes great and small in 'Horsle and Wodeham'.³ The outcome being that Chertsey Abbey was denied the right to those of Horsell, for although in Godley Hundred, it was parochially a chapelry of Woking, whilst Woodham came within Chertsey Parish. The tithes of Horsell, Pyrford and Pirbright originally belonged to the Rectory of St Peters, Woking, but in 1262 these were appropriated with that Rectory to Newark Priory. Horsell along with the other chapels became dependent on a stipend for the curate payable from this house. According to the Taxation of Pope Nicholas IV in 1291, the chapels of Horsell and Pyrford were taxed at fifteen marks (£10) and charged £1 per annum for the tenths. There are numerous entries throughout the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries in the Registers of the bishops of Winchester confirming this valuation of the two chapels.

So poor was Horsell, that on 2 April, 1457, Roger Haylle a canon regular of Newark was granted a special licence by Bishop William Wainflete (1447-1486), to officiate at Horsell three days a week for the term of one year, as there was no income to support a full-time priest.

At the dissolution of Newark Priory (1538), Horsell's revenue and advowson passed to the Crown. The benefice now became a perpetual curacy under licence of the Ordinary, the curates' stipend being paid by the owners of the advowson.

By letters patent dated 25 September, 1609, tithes and advowson were granted with those of Woking in trust for Sir Francis Aungier, Knt. at an annual payment of £19. 6s. to the Crown. Further letters patent dated 30 July, 1628, granted to Ralph Wise and Henry Harryman in trust for Christopher Earl of Anglesea, the chapel of Horsell with house and all tithes lands and tenements belonging to the chapel, in late occupation of one Edward Jones, at an annual rent of 2s. payable to the Crown. Edward Jones appears to have been the former curate. This latest grant only refers to the small tithes. After changing hands on several occasions they were finally conveyed by Francis Earl of Longford (grandson of Sir Francis Aungier) on 15 July, 1682 to Richard Lee and William Beauchamp in trust for Richard Bonsey, Richard Roake, John Collyer and John Scotcher, in four equal shares.⁴ Subsequently the Scotcher Family sold their share to Richard Fladgate of Woking, and the Bonsey Family sold to the Collyers. Descendants of these lay-impropriators continued to hold the advowson (the tithes having been sold off) until 1879. By Act of Parliament the Perpetual Curacy was converted to a vicarage in 1868.

There was one instance before this act when the living was referred to as a vicarage. This occurred on 12 April, 1679, when Thomas Quincey, M.A. was instituted Vicar of Horsell by Bishop George Morley of Winchester (1662-1684) on the presentation to the living by Francis Earl of Longford the Impropiator. Bishop Morley again calls it a vicarage in his will, when he gave directions for augmenting the benefice. His intentions were possibly to induce the lay-impropriators to restore to it the small tithes, therefore creating a vicarage.

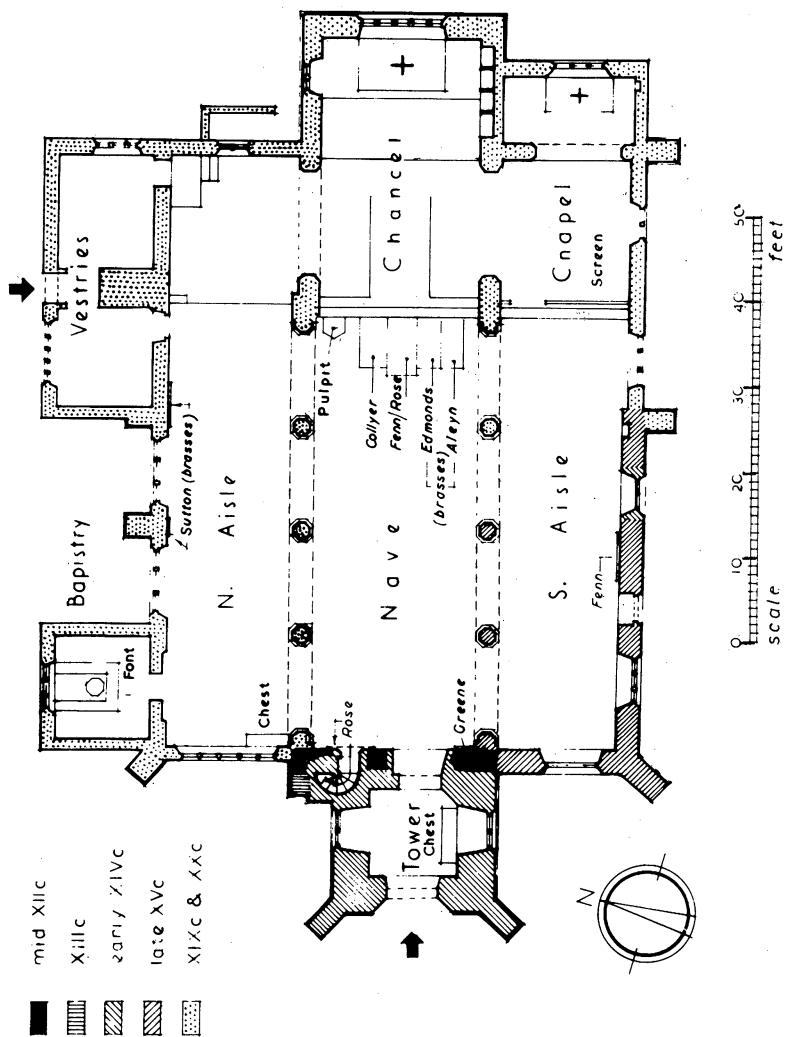
From the earliest times Horsell had been within the Diocese of Winchester, but in 1927 it became part of the new Diocese of Guildford.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CHURCH

The church is situated on the spur of a ridge that runs in an east-west direction through the parish, towards Kettlewell and the Woodham Road. From the tower one can get fine views of the Chobham Ridges to the north-west and the North Downs to the south.

It is reasonable to assume that the first building to be erected on the site was completed some time during the middle of the twelfth century as in the

St. MARY THE VIRGIN · HORSELL



R.J.B.
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Fig. 1. Plan.

case of St Nicholas, Pyrford. The original chapel would have been of the two-cell type, comprising of a nave and chancel. The nave occupying the site of the first three bays of the present nave, with an external length of 47 feet and width of 25 feet. The chancel would be slightly narrower than the nave and was about 25 feet in length. If any part of this building still exists, it possibly forms part of the material used in the west wall of the nave.

During the following century buttresses were added to this chapel, one still remaining (see plan, Fig. 1) now against the tower staircase turret on the north side.

In the first half of the fourteenth century major improvements were carried out. New two-light windows of 'Decorated' design were inserted in the walls which were either heightened, or completely rebuilt on the existing site. Part of the roof over the nave dates from this period as do the tie beams. These improvements were completed by 1340, with the erection of a three-storeyed tower at the west end. Until this time the main entrance into the chapel was possibly through a south doorway.

By the middle of the fifteenth century this chapel was in a 'ruinous condition', and it was probably following the licence granted to Roger Haylle as stated above, that further improvements were made. These would include the replacement and addition of windows and the construction of a chancel screen and a rood loft, the latter entered through an opening high in the south wall of the nave reached by a staircase.

Towards the end of the fifteenth century the south aisle was built, separated from the nave by an arcade of three arches, resting on octagonal pillars. The arches are very plain design being double chamfered and resembling those at St Peter, Newdigate. The aisle was shorter in length to the nave allowing for the rood loft entrance.

The materials used in construction of the church so far, were a flinty conglomerate sometimes known as 'pudding-stone' with a covering of mortar and a dressing of iron-stone and chalk-stone. Also there are several red tiles and a number of 'sarsen stones', found on the neighbouring heath. The roof of the nave and aisle were covered with slate.

During the next three hundred years there were no major additions to the church, but towards the end of the eighteenth century the chancel was rebuilt of brick with a tiled roof, and a gable was added to the roof of the south aisle to house the Fenn monument. It appears from a photograph taken in 1889 and showing the east end of the south aisle, that the original east window of this aisle had been removed and replaced by one of a 'domestic' type. Another photograph of the same date reveals, if studied carefully, that the brick chancel was built on the foundations of the original, as the corner stones are clearly visible. At this rebuilding the chancel arch was removed.

In 1847 the timber roofs of the nave, aisle and chancel were encased in plaster, and provision was made for a porch and vestry accommodation on the south side of the chancel. Slightly later a two-light window was inserted

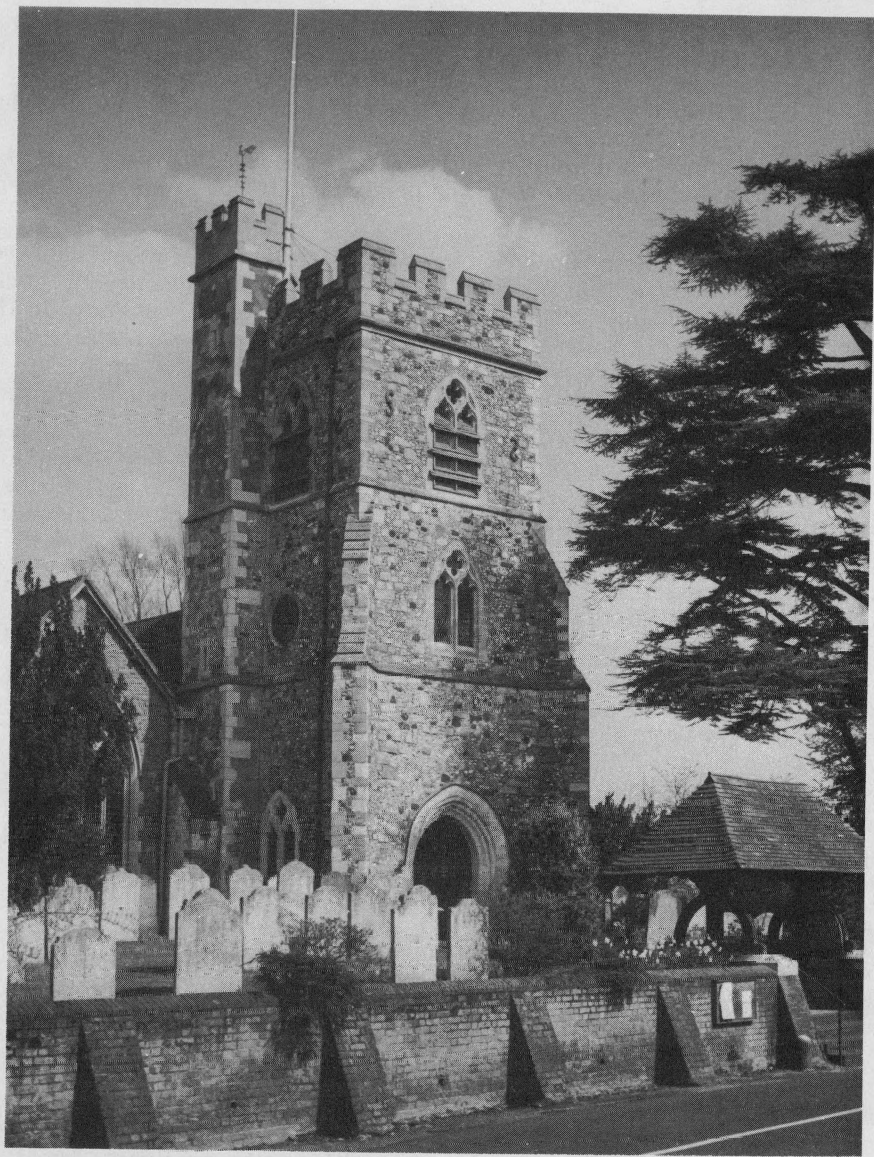


Plate I. Church of St Mary-the-Virgin, Horsell.

into the north wall of the chancel to give additional light, and possibly the east window was renewed at the same time.

The church underwent extensive alterations in 1890. The brick chancel was demolished and both nave and aisle were extended eastwards by the addition of another bay, and a new and larger chancel constructed. There was a gallery at the west end of the nave and aisle (at some stage the three-light window that existed in the north wall had been considerably raised and altered to give improved lighting in this gallery) and this together with the gable in that aisle were removed. The plaster mentioned above was also removed at this time.

Owing to the increase in population the north aisle with clergy and choir vestries were built in 1909 at a cost of £2,600. The small sanctuary, dedicated to the Holy Trinity, at the east end of the south aisle was added in 1910 as a thanks giving for deliverance from what might have been a fatal accident due to a runaway horse. Memorials to the Pares family are erected here. The architect responsible for these changes was Mr W. Unsworth.

The latest addition to the church was the baptistry, dedicated by Bishop Talbot, October, 1921. It was the gift of the Reverend F. R. Cocks, a former curate, in memory of his youngest son drowned at sea on active service in the Great War of 1914-18.

All these later extensions to the church were constructed of Bargate stone with 'Decorated' style windows, therefore blending favourably with the earlier work.

FEATURES OF INTEREST

On the outside of the baptistry wall are the remains of two windows which were removed from the original north wall when the north aisle was built in 1909. Both are of two-lights, the first being of the 'Decorated' style which prevailed during the early fourteenth century. The other, being mid-fifteenth century, was originally set low at the east end of the north wall, possibly giving light to a pre-Reformation altar there.

In the porch and north aisle are oak chests probably dating from the sixteenth and fifteenth centuries respectively. The medieval west doors of the church can be seen on entering the nave.

THE CHANCEL

In the chancel, the screen, oak stalls and sedilia in the sanctuary, are all worthy of note. The east window was inserted in 1892, and is the work of Burlison and Grylls. The subject depicts Our Lord on the Cross, and the figures of the Blessed Virgin, St John, St Peter and St Paul. It is dedicated

to the Reverend John Back, Vicar of Horsell 1878-1884, and responsible for the alterations to the church in 1890. The Altar was presented to the church in 1879 by Miss Gertrude Rowland in memory of her father, General Andrew Rowland, R.A., of Grove Barrs, Horsell. Hanging in the chancel is a candelabra which is thought to have been made in the first half of the eighteenth century, but was at some time brought in from another church.

The two manual organ, which was installed at the east end of the north aisle in 1909, is this year (1973) being replaced by a new instrument.

THE SOUTH AISLE

This aisle has much of interest. Until 1840 the church possessed what has been described as a 'Handsome Gothic Screen', but only fragments now remain, incorporated in the present screen in this aisle.

In the south wall there is a piscina which suggests that there was an altar at the east end of this aisle in pre-Reformation days.

On the chamfered edge of the outer stonework of the south doorway is a good example of a masons' mark (the dot and line pattern). Another on the same stone but on the outer face is much mutilated.

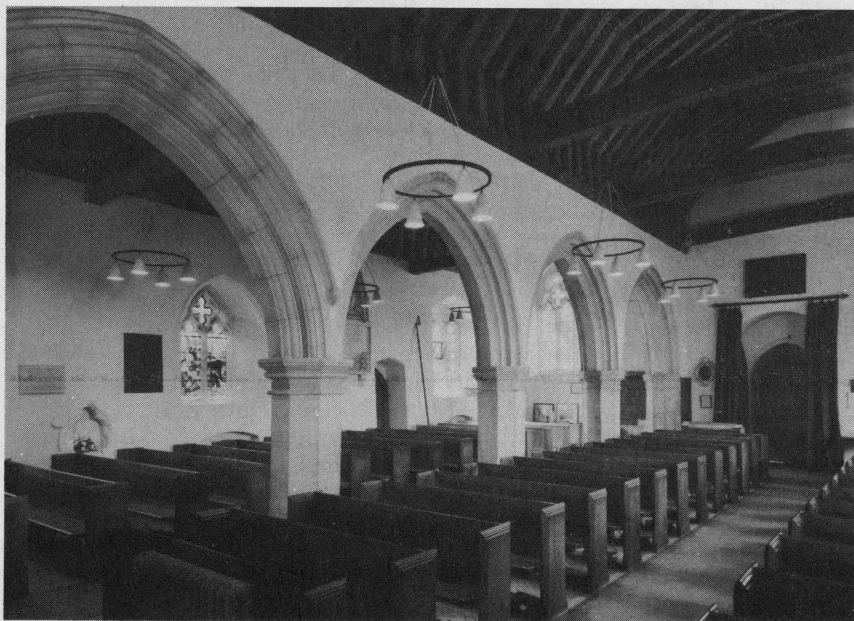


Plate II. St Mary-the-Virgin, Horsell. Interior looking south-west.

To the east of this doorway is a two-light 'Decorated' window. This was originally in the south wall of the nave, but was removed to its present position when the aisle was built towards the end of the fifteenth century. It is interesting to note that the style and dimensions of this window with its quatrefoil tracery correspond exactly with the remains of the window on the baptistry wall, and were obviously inserted about the same time (c. 1320). The three-light square-headed window the other side of the doorway is contemporary with the aisle. The window at the west end was added about 1890 for additional light.

The other windows in this aisle have good though modern stained glass representing the Nativity and Baptism, while those in the chapel depict the Transfiguration and the Presentation of the Infant Jesus in the Temple.

A most interesting and unusual feature is the iron spit 11 ft 7 ins long. There were originally two, and these were mentioned in an inventory of church goods taken in 1553, as 'broches', together with a 'caudron'. It has been suggested that these were used on occasion of a parish festival, perhaps for roasting an ox.

THE PULPIT

The pulpit is made of oak and was erected in 1602 as appears from an entry in the Churchwardens' Account Book:-

1602; Item to Harrysonn the Joyner for mending the Pewes in the Church and Chauncell and for his Puylypytt 24s. 8d.

Until 1890 this pulpit was placed near the middle of the north wall of the nave, when it then possessed a sounding-board.

THE OLD FONT

In the vestry are photographs and sketches of the church as it appeared before the nineteenth-century alterations. One sketch by J. Howell and dated 1814, depicting the old font is particularly interesting. This font, which was removed from the church about 1840, stood at the west end of the nave to the south of the main doorway. It consisted of a large square block of stone surmounted by four slender columns, one at each corner, and one wider central column. These columns supported a smaller square block containing the font bowl. Set into each side of this upper block were five round-headed indents. The font gives the appearance of being Transitional Norman work c. 1150, and would be contemporary with the first building.

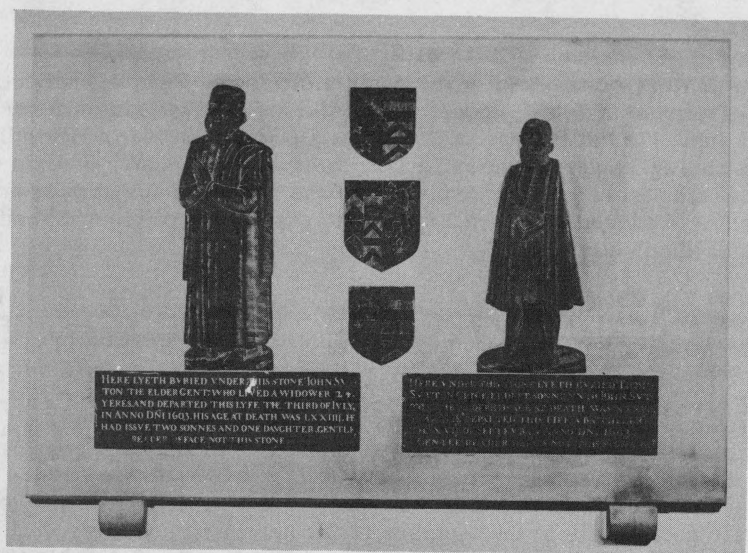


Plate III

St Mary-the-Virgin, Horsell. Brasses of John and Thomas Sutton.

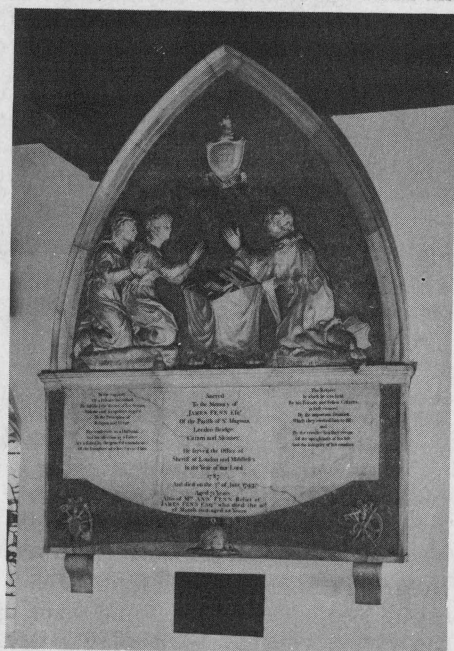


Plate IV

St Mary-the-Virgin, Horsell.
The Fenn Monument.

MEMORIALS

A striking feature on the wall of the south aisle is the Fenn monument. It is made of marble and was placed here to the memory of James Fenn who died on 3 June, 1793 at the age of 71 years. He was a native of Horsell, who having settled in London, acquired a large fortune by industry and perseverance. The inscription informs us that he was citizen and skinner of the parish of St Magnus, London Bridge, and served the office of Sheriff of London and Middlesex in 1787.

The figures represented in the monument have curious anachronistic poses and remind one of the earlier Jacobean age. On the right is the figure of James Fenn in a Sheriff's gown, kneeling on a cushion. In the middle is a table on which books lay open. Kneeling on the left and facing Sheriff Fenn are the figures of his wife and surviving daughter. Above these figures is a coat of arms, and beneath, a beehive with bees. At each corner farming implements are portrayed.

Another white marble monument, at the west end of the nave above the tower stair doorway, is to the memory of Sir John William Rose Kt., Sergeant-at-Law (died 11 October, 1803 aged 53 years) and Ann his wife (died 6 November, 1809 aged 55 years). Sir William was for 14 years Recorder of London in the reign of George III, and here is figured wearing a wig and standing on the left of an urn, whilst Ann his wife, the daughter of James Fenn, stands on the right. The whole is rather 'Baroque' in character.

There is a stone slab recording the death of James Fenn and Sir William Rose, at the east end of the nave close to the chancel screen. Adjoining this stone is another commemorating John Collyer, originally situated near the altar rails in the old chancel. The inscription reads (now very difficult to decipher):-

Here lyeth under this stone ye body of John Collyer, of this Parish, who departed this life (ye 2nd day of December, 1689, aged 52 years, two weeks and three days.

To the south of the main entrance is a small blackmarble plaque to the memory of John Greene (previously against the south wall of the old chancel).

Neere to this place lyes interred ye Body of John Greene, late Citizen and Mercer of London, who departed this life the 31st of March, 1651.

A curious feature of a Parish Church are the four carved stone heads of former Vicars of Horsell. The carvings are to be found on the eastern pillars of the nave. The Vicars represented are John Back 1878-1884; W. H. Turle 1884-1897; Norman Pares 1897-1935; and F. Alwyne Woodard 1935-1956.

BRASSES

All the historic brasses in the church appear to have been moved from their original positions, some more than once. The three Sutton brasses now placed on two slabs on the wall of the north aisle, were removed from the old chancel floor at the time of the rebuilding in 1890.

On the smaller slab is placed the inscription to Faith Sutton, above which is a brass portraying the three children of John Sutton the elder.

The inscription reads:-

Here lieth buried under this stone Fayth Sutton the wife of John Sutton
ye young Gent: & daughter to Hewgh Fearclough of London Gent: Her
age at death was 24 yeres. She departed this life the 23 of August in
Anno Dni 1603. She left two daughters & never had more children.
Gentle reader deface not this stone.

The larger slab contains the effigies and inscriptions to John Sutton the elder and Thomas Sutton, with three shields between them representing the Arms of the Sutton family, the centre one incorporating those of the Fairclough family. The inscriptions read:-

(1) Here lyeth buried under this stone John Sutton the elder Gent: who
lived a widower 24 yeres. And departed this lyfe the third of July in
Anno Dni 1603. His age at death was LXXIII. He had issue two sonnes
and one daughter. Gentle reader deface not this stone.

(2) Here under this stone lyeth buried Thomas Sutton Gent. (eldest
sonne unto John Sutton the elder) His age at death was XXXVIII yeres.
He departed this life (a Batcheler) the XVIIth of Septemb. in Anno Dni
1603. Gentle reader deface not this stone.

Another Sutton brass is mentioned by John Aubrey (1627-1697) in his 'Natural History and Antiques of Surrey', but this has long since disappeared from the church. It read:-

Here under lyeth buried the body of John Sutton, Gent who deceased the
23rd June 1612.

The Sutton family lived at Castle House in Woodham Road, one of the oldest houses in the parish, and believed to have been associated with Windsor Castle.

Two more brasses are to be found on the floor of the nave, near the lectern. The larger dedicated to Thomas Edmonds, has two well-designed effigies, under which are two plates portraying the children. The inscription reads:-

Here lyeth buried the Body of Thomas Edmonds Cittizen & Mr.
Carpenter to the Chamber & one of the 4 vewers of that Honorable City
of London who had to wife Ann Frognall the daughter of William



Plate V

St Mary-the-Virgin, Horsell. The Rose Monument.

Frognall Cittizen & fishmonger of London by whome he had issue 5 sons and 2 daughters, who deyped this life the 26th of August Ano 1619, she still surviving until... (no room on the plate for the conclusion).

Finally there is the inscription to the Reverend John Aleyn. This is pre-Reformation (c. late fourteenth-century) and has a Latin text.

Hic jacet tumulatus Joh'n's Aleyn, Capellan, anime cujuc p'piciet Deus, Amen.

These last two brasses remain on their original stone slabs, that for Thomas Edmonds previously situated in the middle of the nave, and that for John Aleyn at the entrance to the chancel.

THE TOWER AND BELLS

The tower, which is of fourteenth-century origin, was restored in 1884 when it was encased in clunch (chalk-stone) at a total cost of £1,226. At this

restoration the third face of the clock (the west face) was removed, and a ringers chamber was constructed above the porch. The ringers previously rang from the porch. In 1932 the outer casing of the tower was showing signs of considerable dilapidation and was removed in that year. Further restoration work to the tower was carried out in 1949.

The porch of the tower contains, on the north and south sides, badly weathered 'Decorated' windows. Other windows in the tower are modern replicas. Access to the bell and clock chambers is by way of a stone stair-way the entry to which is by a door at the west end of the nave. The door into the clock chamber is oak and certainly contemporary with the older work. This would suggest that the room may have been a 'strong room' where valuables and vestments were kept in earlier times. The weather vane on the turret has the date 1784 and initials 'E.H.' cut into it.

In 1553 it was recorded in the inventory already mentioned above, that there were '3 belles in the steeple', but by 1741 there were four. There is no record available indicating when the extra one was added. These four bells were taken down and replaced by six new ones by Robert Catlin of Holborn and were rung for the first time on 14 December, 1741. The inscription on the tenor bell includes the names of the then churchwardens, Henry Roake and William Collyer, surnames still familiar in Horsell today.

THE CHURCH PLATE

Most of the church plate is fairly modern, but the following three items are interesting:-

- (1) Silver cup. This has hall marks of 1818 with the following inscription:

'For the use of the Parish of Horsell'.

James Cobbett)
Henry Still) Churchwardens

- (2) Base metal paten. This contains the above inscription but has the date 1818 included.

- (3) Tankard-shaped pewter flagon. This bears the mark 'IP' in a shield and has the following inscription:-

'For ye use of ye Parish of Horshill, 1713'

John Fenn)
William Inwood) Churchwardens

THE REGISTERS

The Registers of baptisms and burials date from 1653, and marriages from 1654. The old volume also contains details of monies collected for various

relief purposes from 1658 to 1671 and in 1716. These were known as 'Briefs'

The church possesses the Churchwardens' Account Book covering the period 1600-1748. This book also contains the following items:-

- (1) Seating arrangements in the church as agreed by the curate (Reverend John Flutter 1699-1727), churchwardens and principal inhabitants of Horsell, at a vestry meeting for the year commencing 17 February, 1720/21.

(It is interesting to note that in the visitation returns made by the curate to Bishop Richard Willis of Winchester in 1725, the population of Horsell was estimated to be between 300 and 400 persons.)

- (2) A specification of the bells in 1741, giving the individual weights of the old and new ring.

- (3) An agreement dated 19 May, 1649, settling a dispute over a well on Church Hill. The dispute arose concerning a well in the possession of Henry Myllest of 'Pollard House' and the 'Minister' Thomas Harper of the 'Vicarage House', as to fetching water and maintenance. It was amicably agreed by reference to the previous owners of Pollard house (John and William Boylett) that usage was open to both and maintenance costs were shared, as with the previous curate, Thomas Hellows.

NOTES

1. Chertsey Abbey was founded in A.D. 666 and this property formed part of a large estate granted to the Abbot Erconwald, later Bishop of London, by Frithewald who was overlord of Surrey.
2. 'Justices Assembly in Guildford in Michaelmas term 1279', *Surrey A.C.*, X (1891), 159.
3. Ref. to Court of Exchequer Ledger Book of Chertsey Abbey, folio 53a.
4. At the same time Maximilian Emily purchased the tithes of Woking, and covenanted with Richard Lee and William Beauchamp to pay annually to the Crown £19. 6s.