

# St.George's Guide

## St.GEORGE'S GUIDE

St Georges front page &diam; St Georges Guide &diam; Flower festival &diam; Free school Foundation

## DEAR VISITOR

On behalf of the parochial Church council, may I welcome you to this ancient parish church. You are assured of a warm welcome from all who worship here, and we hope you will enjoy the beauty and tranquillity of this hallowed place.

St. George's is popularly known as the 'Cathedral of the Feldon', being the grandest church in the Warwickshire 'field land' south of the river Avon. The building is 162ft (49m) long and 57ft (17m) wide with a tower 120ft (36m) high. Although the church is very large for ordinary parochial use, it has a special quality of light and holiness that reflects the affection of Brailes folk of past and present generations.

Postcards are normally on sale and you are welcome to take photographs. Allow some time for quiet thought or prayer as you visit, and if you are staying in the village, join us in our worship. The times of Sunday and mid-week services, as well as contact details for the vicar and churchwardens, are on the notice board in the porch.

Best wishes and God bless,  
Nicholas Morgan

Brailes Vicarage, June 2008

## INTRODUCTION

### The manor and parish of Brailes

Before the Norman Conquest, the manor of Brailes was part of the estates of Earl Edwin, grandson of Leofric and Godiva, and one of the Saxon earls who were trusted counsellors of King Harold. After the Conquest the manor was retained by the Crown among the land confiscated from Saxon nobles. By 1130 it had been granted by Henry I to the Earl of Warwick, and continued to be one of the chief demesne manors of the earls, descending with the title and castle of Warwick. In 1315 it was valued at £93 5s 4d, only a few shillings less than the castle and manor of Warwick and twice the value of any of the earl's other manors. In the Domesday survey of 1086 Brailes was valued at £55 and a render of 20 cartloads of salt, which was transported from Droitwich via Stratford along the ancient Salt Way. In the early

thirteenth century after a dispute with Walter de Cantilupe, vicar of Brailes, a certain Richard of Droitwich acknowledged his obligation to render amounts of salt annually to the church of Brailes. At Domesday Brailes comprised 46 hides of land, rather more than 8½ square miles; (the present area of the parish is roughly 6 square miles). Within the ecclesiastical parish of Brailes are included the former manors of Chelmscote (held in 1190 by William de Turville) and Winderton (held in 1242 from the Earl of Warwick by Robert Deyville). When Robert de Clifford, who then owned the Winderton estate, fell at Bannockburn in 1314, it was said to provide an annual rent of one hundred shillings. In addition, the nearby village of Cherington was counted a hamlet of Brailes in mediaeval times.

In 1248 Brailes was granted a Monday market and a three-day Fair 'on the eve, day and morrow of St. George's day' - a valuable extra source of revenue - and Brailes remained a bustling market town with a thriving water mill and an important role in the wool trade. This prosperity was reflected in the fact that the church we see today now began to take shape. Subsequently, and for several centuries, Brailes continued to be a 'township' of some importance; a document of the reign of Edward VI (1547- 53) states that 'the parish is of great compass, and hath almost 2000 householding people'. It was probably, therefore, one of the largest towns in the county, after Coventry and Warwick, at a time when Birmingham was a mere hamlet. Aerial surveys in recent years have shown how modern fields conceal extensive networks of ancient roads and homes, 'tofts and crofts', in several areas of Upper and Lower Brailes, Grove End, Winderton and Chelmscote.

### St. George's Church

It seems certain that Brailes, which is known to have been a settled community from even before the Roman occupation of Britain, would have possessed a church at an early date. Indeed there are suggestions that at a time before parish boundaries were established Brailes may have been very much larger than it is today, and that the church in Brailes may indeed have been a 'minster church', with a community of priests established in the early years of Christianity in Britain and associated with a royal stronghold or major lay or ecclesiastical estate. For none of this, however, is there documentary evidence. What is known for certain is that the church and living of Brailes was presented by Roger, Earl of Warwick, to the priory of Kenilworth in 1124-25, the recorded list of incumbents beginning with Thomas in about 1120. The dedication of St. George is the earliest in the diocese, and reflects the importance given to that saint not only by the crusaders but by more humble folk, there having been an image of St. George (and probably an altar to him) in the church at least in the sixteenth century.

The present church structure dates mainly from 1325-1375, being of the Decorated style, but like many ancient churches, it has undergone a series of alterations, enlargements and restorations. For example, the church interior was modernised in 1824 and there was a further restoration in 1879 which was both extensive and, for the period, costly. £4,500 was raised as a result of 37,000 letters of appeal sent out by the vicar, the Rev. Thomas Smith. Some idea of the condition of the church immediately before restoration is given by a number of photographs on display.

The Prior and Canons of Kenilworth Abbey remain the most likely source of money in the early fourteenth century for the massive extension of the original church, to give us what we see today (minus the tower) , although St. George's probably enjoyed the loyalty and support of the community it served, people who took pride in ensuring that their church should reflect the prosperity of the village as a whole. Today it still stands as a reminder of Brailes' past, and has a continuing role as a Christian beacon for all time, while the affection of local people may be judged by the various works of art which have been so generously lent or donated by a number of local residents and which add to the intrinsic interest of St. George's.

### A TOUR OF THE CHURCH

For a tour of the church, follow this guide and the numbered points on the plan.

#### 1. Centre of Nave

1124 is the earliest known reference to the church though there are many others in the early years of that century - the vicarage itself was instituted between 1186 and 1189. Some of the foundations of that twelfth century church were discovered beneath the south arcade of the nave during restoration work of 1879, (a few stones with late Saxon or early Norman decoration were reused when the tower was built in the fifteenth century).

Where you are now standing, roughly on a line between the north door and the south porch, marks the full length of the original nave dating from that time, and the church was only extended to its present dimensions between 1330 and 1340. The first three piers of the southern half of the nave with the arches and wall above them are almost certainly of the twelfth century - the earliest part of the present church. The vertical seam above the third pillar probably indicates the point from which the extension started. In addition to the extension of the nave, the high windows (clerestory) were added, together with a new roof. This latter work was done in three stages, shown by the arrangement of the roof timbers, which are supported at the eastern end by alternate long and short brackets and at the western end by long ones only. The style of the window mullions also differ between the east and the west halves of the nave; the six eastern-most windows in the clerestory on the south side are also slightly lower than the western ones on the same side, and they appear to have been completed earlier. It may be that here, as in other churches, we have some evidence of the way in which the Black Death in 1349, which reduced England's population by half, disrupted the work of building and resulted in a different style when work was resumed.

As you look upwards you will notice the row of delightful carved faces (corbels) supporting the roof 8 timbers, twelve on each side, the faces of people and of animals, together with some mythical figures ('grotesques'), all mostly dating from c.1350, though one on the north wall of the nave, depicting a vicar in full bottomed wig and bands, seems to date from the repairs of 1649. Was this intended to represent the Rev William Richardson, vicar 1652-1695, fourteen of whose sermons survive? The puritan revolution following the Civil War rejected the idea of decorative or ornamental features in a church and these corbels supporting the roof trusses were concealed (reversed or plastered over) in the restoration work of 1649, only to be re-discovered in 1879. Almost all traces of the mediaeval painted decoration were removed in the nineteenth century when the ancient plasterwork was removed from all the walls, though faint traces of colour can still be seen on some of the south piers, on two of the brackets to another beam at the east end of the nave, and - the best example - on the first or eastern-most roof beam of the nave dating from the fourteenth century, which shows the central figure of Christ with the twelve Apostles ranged on both sides. Royalist troops were quartered in Brailes in 1643 during the Civil War and subsequently extensive repairs were undertaken in 1649. Much of that work was of poor style and quality and was largely replaced in the restoration of 1879 which included the almost complete rebuilding of the north arcade and clerestory. During this restoration much original material was re-used. It is worth noticing that the capitals of the north piers, like the older ones on the south, are all of 9 slightly different design. The roof timbers also were renewed in the nineteenth century which is also when heating was installed and the old box pews replaced.

The parish chest bears a roughly carved inscription 'B.C.1758'. This was added later, however, for the chest itself dates from the sixteenth or seventeenth century; it has some finely wrought iron strap work.

2. The South Aisle - Front This south arcade and aisle were added to the original church in about 1280 and a complete roof truss dating from the 1300s is visible in this aisle at the east end above the Lady Chapel altar. It seems likely that there has been an altar at this spot from early times; for example, Richard Earl of Warwick, ('Warwick the Kingmaker') founded the Guild of Our Blessed Lady in Brailes in 1433 and one of the prime functions of such a Guild would have been to maintain the decoration and illumination of a

chapel or altar in honour of Mary, the mother of Jesus. (There was already in Chelmscote a chantry chapel similarly dedicated - to the Blessed Virgin Mary). The current altar and reredos here are recent, dating from 1948, and were given in memory of Emily Pickering by her husband, Thomas Clarke Pickering, and it is appropriate that this should be situated beneath a window installed in 1920 in memory of Rev. Frederick Garrard, whom Mr. Pickering served as parish clerk for nearly forty years. The window depicts the Parable of the Sower, in which we are challenged about how we receive God's word.

The three narrow lancet windows at the front of this aisle are of the early English style. The glass itself is Victorian but the small medallions of beautiful stained glass date from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries - the earliest surviving glass in St. George's. (There is one in each of the windows of the south aisle). Also to be noted are a further series of carved faces on the corbels supporting the roof trusses.

3. The Chancel Arch In the fifteenth century a rood screen and loft were inserted in the front of the chancel arch, and although these were removed during the Reformation, stairs (now blocked by modern masonry) gave access to both loft and screen, for the placing or renewing of candles in order to illuminate the rood, (the figure of Christ, with Mary and St. John on either side). The doorway giving access to this loft can be traced in outline high in the north wall of the chancel to the west of the organ chamber arch. The chancel arch itself was increased in height only in 1879. The present choir stalls, lectern, and seven branched candelabra also date from the nineteenth century, and it was at this time that the old three-decker pulpit, dating from about 1640, which at one time occupied a central position on the chancel steps was removed, its upper part still forming the present pulpit. (See the photographs on the pillar nearest the north door).

#### 4. The Chancel

The whole of the chancel was rebuilt in the fourteenth century, and the original roof of this period is said to be preserved above the lining visible today. To the fourteenth century also belong the splendid east window of five trefoiled lights, a superb fishnet stonework design of reticulated tracery, (the stained glass from the Victorian period shows five scenes of Jesus's life from the Last Supper to Pentecost). Also from this time are the two windows in the north side and those directly opposite them on the south side, and the priest's doorway. All of these are of red-brown sandstone. Note the two arrow head mason's marks on the jambs of the two easternmost windows. The large four-light window on the south side was added c.1450 and is a typical example of the perpendicular style.

On the south side of the chancel there are three sedilia on three levels, corresponding to the three steps occupied at a mass in the middle ages by three officiating clergy - the celebrant, the deacon and the sub-deacon. They were 1112 restored in 1879 which is also when the stone reredos and altar were presented by Canon Thoyts, whose family built the church in Winderton.

The high altar has a coloured cloth (&lsquo;frontal&rsquo;) which is changed according to the season of the church's year. There is a superb millennium frontal used during the Trinity season, for which full details are provided in a separate booklet.

Beneath the carpet on the chancel floor are seventeenth and eighteenth century gravestones of the Bishop family. They are of special interest because of the long connection of the family with Brailes. In 1540 a member of the family, Richard Bishop, became vicar of Brailes, and remained its incumbent until 1556. At the Reformation the Bishop family remained faithful members of the Roman Catholic Church, but nonetheless became patrons of the living of Brailes, the avowson of which was acquired by John Bishop in 1584, and remained in the family until 1712. William Bishop, born in 1533, was the son of one of the nephews of the Rev Richard Bishop. He was consecrated Titular Bishop of Chalcedon in Paris in 1623, and sent by the Pope &lsquo;for the comfort of Roman Catholics&rsquo; to exercise spiritual oversight of all of that faith in England and Scotland. He was thus the first Englishman to receive Episcopal orders from the Holy See after the Reformation. He died in London in 1624 at the age of 71 and was possibly buried at the church of St. Pancras. Meanwhile, his forebears lie buried in the chancel. The organ cost £275 when it was installed in 1879. It was completely overhauled in 1966 and again in 2001.

#### 5. The North Aisle - Front

Just as the eastern end of the south aisle has the Lady Chapel, so there are strong indications that there was a corresponding chapel at this point. It was most likely here that there was a chantry chapel founded in 1348 by Thomas de Pakington (of Brailes) with two priests appointed to sing mass daily at the altar near the grave of Pakington's father, and to pray for Thomas Beauchamp, the Earl of Warwick, his ancestors and his heirs, and for Thomas Pakington himself, and it seems probable that over the next two hundred years this chantry chapel became known as the chapel of St. Nicholas mentioned in 1554. Entry would have been through the large arch, still visible although filled in with stone when a vestry was formed, a small door being retained. In support of the supposition that this was the site of the chantry chapel, it should be noted that one of the vestry windows is of fourteenth century design and closely resembles the windows in the chancel, without an interior sill and continuing to the floor. The other altars, to St. George, to St. Michael and to a third saint whose name is no longer decipherable have locations that are not known.

The vestry was added in 1649, the year which saw the end of the Civil War and the beheading of Charles I. While it

seems unusual that a vestry should be built during the Commonwealth period when the only vestment worn was a simple preaching gown, extensive rebuilding took place which suggests that like other Cotswold churches, Brailes had suffered some severe damage during the war, (Royalist troops had been quartered in Brailes in 1643). In what is now the vestry there used to be the staircase to the rood loft, inserted into the lower corner of a window earlier than the rest of those in the north aisle and blocked up when the rood staircase was made. The outline of the entrance can be seen to the south of the vestry door about four feet from floor level; it is now incorporated into the chimney flue. Inside the vestry there are several objects of considerable interest. The vestry table - still in use - is an early eighteenth century design, in oak with carved fluted square legs. There is also a remarkable fifteenth century framed oak chest with elaborately carved front and wheel ornaments, and which shows signs of having originally had two locks, one at each end. When these were replaced by the single lock, the sockets were skilfully filled and recarved. The lid is a later restoration. Also in regular use are a Communion Chalice and Paten, of simple design bearing the inscription &lsquo;BRAYLES 1659&rsquo;.

The year is of particular interest, for it was then that the brief nine month Protectorship of Richard Cromwell occurred. It was a time of great turbulence for the Church as for the country as a whole and few churches replaced their altar vessels. Within a period of eleven years England saw the execution of Charles I, the rule of two Lords Protector and the Restoration of Charles II, with all the consequent changes in the Church of England. A larger Paten, given in 1784, is, in fact, according to its hallmarks, at least a century older. In addition there are also two flagons, a silver one of the nineteenth century and a pewter one of 1700, and five pewter alms plates dated 1708. A silver alms dish was presented in 1920 in memory of Dr. Findlay, a former churchwarden.

The Parish Registers begin in 1570 and, apart from the first pages which are defective, are virtually complete to the present day. They are no longer kept in the vestry but are with the County Record Office in Warwick, where there is free access to them. It is possible to view the vestry and the objects within it, by arrangement.

6. The North Aisle A well-known matchstick model of the Church was completed in 1979 and was placed in St. George&rsquo;s through the generosity of the maker, Mr. Fred Hall of Shipston-on-Stour and at the wish of the P.C.C. It took Mr. Hall seven years to construct, contains approximately 250,000 match sticks and is fully described on the wall nearby. His wish was that the model would help to raise funds for the upkeep of St. George&rsquo;s, and for this purpose there is a box for donations by the main door.

## 7. The West End

The imposing tower, with its splendid internal arch and deeply recessed west window, was added in the fifteenth century, and the original spandrills of the arch of the west door were reversed and recut on the inner side. These, with the inscription &lsquo;1649 churchwardens&rsquo; were replaced in 1879, but may be seen standing under the tower arch. You will also see on the floor a portion of a carved stone column, measuring 26 inches by 9 inches (66cms x 23cms) and depicting foliage and a sow suckling five piglets. It was recovered from the churchyard, and although the date is uncertain, from its carving it is thought to be either part of a Roman column or of a mediaeval cross. On the north wall of the tower there is a board bearing the Royal Arms of George I giving the date as 1722, the year in which Jonathon Carpenter became vicar. The installation of this board in this year may have been prompted to show loyalty to the Hanoverian cause because of suspicions that the Church of England had been sympathetic to the Jacobite rebellion of 1715.

The most notable addition to the church in the eighteenth century was the clock and carillon. The clock mechanism can be dated fairly accurately at 1710; it was in working order until 1957, when it was replaced by an electric movement. The large wooden-shafted pendulum is on display in the church together with the old clock mechanism. The carillon mechanism, which is of the same date, is still in operation, though now electrically driven; it operates by hammers striking the six bells. It is so arranged that throughout the day it plays four hymn tunes, with a different one on Sundays:

At mid-day and mid-night: Wareham: (&lsquo;Jesus, where&rsquo;er thy people meet&rsquo;);  
 4:00am and 4:00pm: Lux Benigna: (&lsquo;Lead kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom&rsquo;);  
 6:00am and 6:00pm: St. Agnes: (&lsquo;Come ye yourselves apart and rest awhile&rsquo;);  
 9:00am and 9:00pm: Eventide: (&lsquo;Abide with me; fast falls the eventide&rsquo;);  
 On Sundays the tune at each of these times is St. David: (&lsquo;Christ is gone up&rsquo;);

Access to the 142 steps up the tower and to view the bells and the clock mechanism is by arrangement. What was described as &lsquo;an ugly gallery painted black and with a partition of lath and plaster&rsquo; which blocked the western arch of the tower completely was removed in 1879. The Tapestry Screen was dedicated on St. George&rsquo;s Day 1990, after three years&rsquo; busy effort by the villagers of Brailles. It depicts village organisations, buildings, views and hobbies. The pattern book font is of excellent fourteenth century work and the deep bowl shows that the practice of total immersion of infants in mediaeval times was general. This pattern book font is octagonal and each face is decorated with different window tracery designs, while beneath them are ballflower ornaments characteristic of the period.

The plain base is probably a later repair and the cover was added in 1879. The carpet surrounding it naming the four rivers around Eden was made, with other needlework in the chancel, by the wife of the Rev. Thomas Smith, in whose memory the wheeled bier was given, (still in use).

## 8. The South Aisle

A display case in the south aisle contains the Town Crier&rsquo;s bell, inscribed &lsquo;Brailles Parish 1812&rsquo;. To the left of the south porch door inside the church is a stone tomb in worn, white limestone &ndash; the recumbent effigy of a priest in mass vestments, which, from the style of moulding on the tomb chest below, has been dated at approximately 1450. It was originally sited outside the porch doorway, but was brought inside in 1933 to protect it from further weathering. There is no inscription to indicate whose tomb it may be, but if the dating is correct, it could be that of Robert Bandy, who was vicar 1433-1455. However, another local tradition claims the figure to be that of an unknown crusader.

## 9. The Porch

The broad south porch, 13½ ft. (4.1 m) square, with open-work parapet, was also added in the fifteenth century. Inside the porch, to the right of the window on the west, can be seen scratch markings which probably indicate that arrows were sharpened there in days when archery was commonly practised in the churchyard. The roof and doors were renewed in 1879. Over the outer doorway is a copy of an eighteenth century sundial recently lovingly repaired. A much older &lsquo;finger&rsquo; sundial can be detected above the door on the left.

## 10. Outside

It is to the fourteenth century that we owe the design of the striking external features of the Church, for example on the south side the fine open-work parapet above the aisle and the varied carvings on the string-course below the nave parapet, including animal heads, a woman&rsquo;s head, several grotesques and ballflower ornament. The stone crocketed pinnacles also all date from this time. It is almost certain that similar decoration adorned the north side, but this and an open-work parapet were replaced in the restoration of 1649. The external buttresses were added in the fifteenth century, presumably to check the out-lean of the chancel walls under the weight of the stone-tiled roof. The open-sided stone bell-turret at the east end of the nave was added in the nineteenth century. Some restoration work, mainly of external masonry, was undertaken in 1933-4. In 1968, the north parapet was restored, and over the years, a continuing programme of repair and restoration has been carried out, including the renewal of mullions, tracery and the pinnacles and parapet on the south side between 1996 and 2003, at a cost of £90,000. As the years go by further maintenance and repairs will be carried out, and any financial assistance we receive from visitors is much appreciated.

Probably the most imposing external feature of St. George&rsquo;s is the massive tower, 120ft high. Although a few stones in the south wall of the tower bear traces of late Saxon or early Norman decoration, the tower itself was built in the

fifteenth century dominating then as now much of the village and the surrounding fields. Apart from its height and its massive bulk standing in perfect symmetry with the rest of the church, the tower is the home of the Brailes Bells, one of the heaviest peals of six bells in the world:

The tenor bell, weighing nearly 1½ tons (1315kgs), was originally made by John Bird of London in the fifteenth century. In 1877, having long been cracked, it was recast, faithfully preserving the original inscription, a verse from an ancient Latin hymn (&lsquo;The Seven Earthly Joys of the Blessed Virgin Mary&rsquo;), attributed to Thomas a Becket; The treble, by Richard Purdy, bears on one side the arms of Charles I when he was still the Prince of Wales and the date 1624; The second bell, now the most ancient of the peal, was cast in the fifteenth century by Henry Jordan of London; The third bell was cast in the nineteenth century; The fourth bell with its inscription &lsquo;I&rsquo;m not the bell I was but quite another &ndash; I&rsquo;m now as rite and sweet as George, my brother&rsquo;, was cast in 1688 by Richard Keen, and again in 1900; The fifth bell &lsquo;Merry George&rsquo; was recast in 1671, as the rhyme on its side indicates: &lsquo;I&rsquo;ll crack no more so ring your fill; Merry George I was and will be still&rsquo;.

The tower clock has dials, each consisting of a slate 1¾ inches (4.5cms) thick and weighing 8cwt. (363kgs). In 1879 two cracked bells were recast, and all of them were re-hung. In 1957, some anxiety being then felt about the safety of the tower, the bells were lowered (see photograph) and re-hung again, and an electrical movement was installed to replace the old clock mechanism.

In 1910 the fine lych gate was erected by the family of Thomas Smith in his memory. This was the vicar under whom the restoration of 1879 was undertaken.

The churchyard is considerably larger now than it was in the middle ages, (when it was also the setting for all sorts of community activities). A number of small well-designed tombstones of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries have been ranged along the south porch and nave walls. The earliest clearly decipherable one is dated 1613.

Although in private ownership now, the row of cottages on the south side of the churchyard are the more modern replacements of houses which formerly belonged to the church and were often occupied by some of the elderly and poorer people of the village, somewhat in the style of alms houses. They were sometimes known as &lsquo;church terrace&rsquo; and even simply &lsquo;the houses in the churchyard&rsquo;.

At the bottom of the path through the churchyard there is a small singlestorey building on the left known as &lsquo;The Free School&rsquo;. This is used by children in the Sunday Club, and is available for church and village. This was formerly a Boys&rsquo; School in the early years of the last century, and before that may have been the site of the Grammar School dating from 1537, itself a new use of the former Guild (hall) of the Blessed Virgin Mary, founded by the Earl of Warwick in 1433, and proscribed at the Reformation. (See below for more information). An alternative site for firstly the Guildhall and then later the ancient Grammar School is a building (now a private house) on the northwest corner of the churchyard.

Perhaps it is largely due to the good relations fostered earlier in Brailes between Anglicans and Roman Catholic communities by the Bishop family, that mutual kindness and understanding continues between all the churches in Brailes today. It is worth noticing a plaque on the exterior of the east wall of the church dated 1810, recording a memorial to &lsquo;Rev John Austen, sometime Pastor to the Catholics&rsquo; - an unusual feature.

## BRAILES CHARITIES

Painted boards in the church record a number of charities and details of their bequests. The oldest is the Willington Dole of 1555 of which £2 is still paid to the poor of Brailes. Another charity of about 1630, the Free School Foundation, from which £20 p.a. was paid for church repairs, derives indirectly from a far older charity, the Guild of the Blessed Virgin Mary, established in 1433 by Richard Neville Warwick the Kingmaker, to support a &lsquo;Fre Scole of Gramer For the Erudycon and bryng upp of dyvers and many pore Scolers&rsquo;. From then, until its dissolution at the Reformation, it maintained two priests in Brailes besides the vicar, &lsquo;One to be Organist and the other Schoolmaster of the Free School&rsquo;, at a stipend of £8 1s 8d p.a. The lands and property of the Guild confiscated by the Crown at the Reformation, passed eventually into private ownership.

Some however were bought by Barnabas Bishop, who applied its rents to the re-endowment of the school and the repair of the church. In addition to these charities, there are those of James Cooper 1678, William Prestige 1732, William Baldwin 1864, Finlay Gibson 1910, Mark Walker 1911, Richard Badger 1920 and E.J.Davis. All continue to benefit the widows, and poor and needy of Brailes. In 1969, the Charities Commissioners approved a scheme, which now unites all of these charities, except the Brailes Free School Foundation, under a single body of eleven trustees, and it is known as &lsquo;The Brailes Charities&rsquo;. By reinvestment of all existing assets in the Charities Investment Trust it has been possible to increase the annual income available for the sick, poor and aged of Brailes, and to set aside many of the rather curious conditions, imposed upon the bestowal of these old charities. The Brailes Free School Foundation continues to support the parish church, the school, and a variety of projects that are educational in nature. Its now substantial income is of great benefit to the parish.

## THE BENEFICE AND PATRONS

The church and living of Brailes prior to the Norman Conquest was in the hands of Earl Edwin. Seized by William the Conqueror, the advowson of the living was conferred upon Roger, Earl of Warwick in the reign of Henry I, who in turn gave it to the Priory of Kenilworth. The canons continued to appoint the incumbents of Brailes until the Dissolution of the Monasteries in 1535. The last incumbent to be appointed by them was John Hill in 1489. After the Dissolution the Crown bestowed the patronage upon the Duke of Suffolk, but on the accession of Mary I, the living again reverted to the Crown who, in 1556, appointed Thomas Bastarde as vicar. The Deed of Presentment on this occasion described the patrons as &lsquo;Philip and Mary - King and Queen&rsquo; since Mary had married Philip of Spain in 1554. By 1584 the advowson had passed to John Bishop and remained in his family until the death of Francis Bishop in 1712. In 1721 it was again sold and remained in private patronage until 1920 when it was conveyed to the present patrons, the Provost and Chapter of Coventry.

## WINDERTON

Finally, mention must be made of St. Peter and St. Paul, Winderton the former daughter church of Brailes. The present Victorian church was erected in 1879 for Canon E. Thoyts at his own expense in memory of his parents. It is a fine specimen of Gothic revival Early English style in brown stone, with a spire 90ft (27.4 m) high and situated in a commanding position looking across the valley toward Brailes. The present church replaces a far older chantry chapel mentioned as early as the beginning of the thirteenth century. Little is known of the history of this chapel, however, and its location may have been further south, near the centre of the ancient hamlet. St. Peter and St. Paul&rsquo;s was closed in 1976 and is now maintained &lsquo;as a memorial and for community purposes&rsquo; by the Feldon Trust. Two or three services are still held there in the summer months, however, as well as occasional concerts.

## CHELMSCOTE

The manor of Chelmscote, dating from at least 1190, also had a chantry chapel (of the Blessed Virgin Mary) for two priests, founded in 1322 by Thomas de Pakington of Brailes, but when the land was enclosed in the fifteenth century the hamlet of Chelmscote was almost totally depopulated and virtually ceased to exist. The two ancient farms of Upper and Lower Chelmscote are now all that remains of the former hamlet. All traces of the chapel have long since vanished. Modern aerial photography shows clear evidence of the mediaeval settlements in both Winderton and Chelmscote in areas now long under plough or pasture.

## LIST OF BRAILES INCUMBENTS

(Date of induction, sometimes approximate)

These begin in the 12th century and continue until the present Vicar, Canon Nicholas Morgan 1979  
Church Guide

1st Published Edition 1879

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7th Revision ~ September 2005

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St Georges front page &diam; St Georges Guide &diam; Flower festival &diam; Free school Foundation

