Great St Mary's
Sawbridgeworth

Passion for Christ - Compassion for all

Great St Mary's Churchyard Tour 2025

The tour begins at the War Memorial
Firstly, look at the Mann Memorial Cottages nearby.

Thomas Mann

These were erected in 1898 by the widow of Thomas Mann, the brewery owner who lived at Great Hyde Hall. Thomas Mann has no known grave and it is likely that his ashes are interred beneath them. There is a plaque dedicated to Thomas Mann inside the church.

Turn to the War Memorial itself
When it was erected in 1919, nobody knew who had been killed as there were no records. Accordingly, local people were asked for names. This meant that many of the fallen were accidentally omitted. The memorial lists 70 servicemen from the Great War, but at least 110 died. In the case of the Archer brothers, 2 are named, but the third (Percy) is missing. This was because the family had moved away. Furthermore, many served underage using an alias. In some cases, this alias is recorded rather than the real name.

Thomas Benjamin Paveley who served as Herbert Michael Paveley

Some people were named on the memorial who had nothing to do with Sawbridgeworth. Harry Duncan Toogood MC was the son of the chief brewer at Charrington's brewery, Burton on Trent. He is named on the memorial because Francis Charrington, the brewery owner, lived at Pishiobury.

Walk towards the church

As you near the main door there is a large grave with the names of the Burton family. Thomas Burton was the owner of Sawbridgeworth Mill which he purchased in 1891 from Edmund Barnard. Thomas was married to Fanny Groves, a relative of the Littler family. The Littler family formerly were millers at both Sawbridgeworth and Sheering. Fanny littler loaned Thomas the money to purchase the mill. Thomas Burton later had a share of South Mill in Bishop's Stortford and was a local politician, further he owned 2 farms. Sawbridgeworth Mill remained in the Burton family until 1962. Thomas was one of the founders of the local Sports Association.

Walk past the church door for a few metres then look to your left. You will need to move from the path. Here, rather unobtrusive, is the grave of John Brickwell. He was a doctor with premises at 4 Bell Street (now a day nursery). John was involved with the health care of the inmates at the local workhouse. His son, also named John, is also buried in the churchyard, continued the family practice, and was likewise involved with the Bishop's Stortford Union workhouse where he was a guardian.

Continue to walk along the path. You will come to a grave on your right covered with toys. A simple wooden cross gives the name of Jackie Matthews. This is one of many graves in the churchyard of small children. This one though, has been 'adopted' by a member of the church, hence the toys you see today.

Look straight ahead and you will see a large tombstone. This belongs to John Strange Jocelyn 5th Earl of Roden, 3rd Baron Clanbrasil of Hyde Hall, 6th Baron Newport.

In 1851 John joined the Army. He became a Lt Colonel with the Scots Fusilier Guards and served in the Crimean War. He was at the battles of the Alma, Balaklava and Inkerman. The regiment suffered 160 casualties at the Alma. None at the others.

There is a scandalous story from the time, that he had an affair with the wife of Lord Randolph Churchill which resulted in the birth of a son, John Strange Churchill, who was the younger brother of Winston Churchill. There appears to be little or no substance to this story, but the Churchill family were in Ireland with John Strange Jocelyn at the right time and the similarity of the names is thought provoking. The family were major landowners in Ireland and 2 ancestors were involved in massacres there. At Gibbet Rath in May 1798, 350 Irish died and in July 1849 the Dollies Brae riot killed 6-7. The Jocelyns were deeply Protestant. Some were Grand Masters of the Orange Order. Catholic Irish hated them.

Now turn to your left and in the distance can be seen a WW1 war grave tombstone in isolation. This belongs to Charles John Reed. This area used to be part of the churchyard and he was buried with his family who are still below the ground.

Now turn around and look at the WW1 war graves. The stories of all of them are of interest. However, we will look at George Henry Watson Walker of the Seaforth Highlanders. George had been born at Coveney in Cambridgeshire. He fought at Mons, Loos and the Somme. In 1917, he was being treated for shellshock at a hospital in Northampton. Here, despite being married, he became emotionally entangled with a nurse. She later tried to end things and went home to Takeley. George then went AWOL and deserted to follow her. After she rejected him again, he wandered and found himself at Spellbrook. Here he committed suicide by walking in front of a train.

In 1917, the treatment of shellshock was haphazard at best. His mind was totally unhinged. Being a deserter/official coward/suicide, George is not named on any official war memorial.

Now turn and walk back to the main path. Cross over and follow a trail for about 10 metres. Stop and look to your left. There is a cross standing under a tree a little way off. This is the grave of Ethelbert Collins and his wife Mabel.

Ethelbert was a local doctor. He took over the former Brickwell practice at 4 Bell Street. He was one of the founders of the local Sports Association. His son, also called Ethelbert, but usually called 'Billy', became the youngest operational fireman in the country, aged 10.

'Billy' at work

Continue along the trail for another 8 metres. On your right is the memorial (it is not a true grave) for Constance Baker. She was an evacuee during WW2 and was killed by a bomb in 1940. Nearby can be found many more WW2 graves including others who died that night with Constance.

Continue on the trail for another 10 metres. Look left at the grave of Harold Ozanne DSO. He was a war hero who served in both world wars. He was a Royal Marine who also served on land. He was present at EVERY major battle in Europe in WW1 on land or sea and he survived being sunk in the North Sea. He was wounded twice. In WW2 he was the commander of the RM Commando Training School in Devon.

Harold in 1917

Harold in 1940

Now walk towards the bench 45' left. There you will find a grave with no headstone, but with white pebbles. This is the grave of Corporal Joseph Vick. He was one of those who took part in the Charge of the Light Brigade at Balaklava. Joseph had his horse shot from under him and seems to have suffered a head injury from his fall, but was not listed in the regimental diary as wounded. In the charge, Joseph's regiment suffered 18 killed, 24 wounded and 16 taken prisoner. Prior to the Crimea, Joseph was stationed in India. He was involved in the First Afghan War and took part in the Battle of Ghazni.

Now walk anticlockwise around the church. There you will see a gravestone currently with an attached 'unsafe' warning sign. This is David Harris, a well-known 'local hero'. He was a baker with large premises at the junction of Bell Street and London Road. He served in WW2 and was promoted to the rank of Captain. He was part of the army of occupation in Austria.

David's great love was the Scouting movement. From at least February 1952 until his retirement in June 1983 (and therefore at 65, technically overaged), David was the Group Leader of the 1st Sawbridgeworth Scouts. However, ever after retiring, he carried on as the chairman of the local Scout's committee until his death in 1989. Although it was never enacted, it was even proposed to make David the group's first Honorary President. This would have been a life appointment.

David Harris, affectionately known as 'Skip'

Walk on for 7 metres. There is a plinth under the tree on your left. This marks the grave of James Moxon RN. James served with the Royal Navy in the War of 1812 against the USA. On 3 April 1813, James took part in the battle of Rappahannock where the British captured 4 US schooners after having to row their boats against the flow of a river for 15 hours.

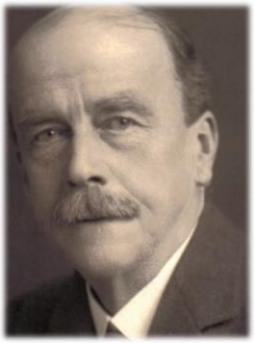
Almost immediately on your right is the large tomb of William Sharp. This was actually William Sharp the elder. (there were 2 of them). He was a local entrepreneur who owned/financed a great deal of the town. He owned the King George IV and the disused High Wych windmill with mortgage interests elsewhere. He lived in Knight Street.

Continue for 2 metres then look at the large gravestone on your left. John Prior '50 years at the King of Prussia'. This was a pub now demolished which existed in London Road. John Prior was a close friend of William Sharp (the elder) and was another entrepreneur. He was involved with another 3 local pubs, farms, bricklaying and property rental.

Now walk to the East wall of the church and stand before it. On the left is a grave with a fallen cross. This belongs to Henry Lipscomb. Henry Alchorne Lipscomb was vicar of Great St Mary's from 1878 until 1909. He was responsible for the tower clock. His son died in the Great War. Henry died in 1923 at Steyning but was buried here.

Henry Alchorne Lipscomb 1839 – 1923

To the right of Henry Lipscomb's grave is the large vault slab giving the name of Francis Ede. Francis was a 'Turkey Merchant'. That is, he traded with the country Turkey and the nearby Levant. He was very wealthy. In 1847, Francis purchased Pishiobury House and move to Sawbridgeworth with his family. Sadly though, on 10 October 1849, Francis was involved in an accident when he was being driven to Harlow (Mill) Station in his personal dog cart. The dog cart overturned near Harlow Mill. Francis was fatally injured and died 19 November 1849. Francis is also commemorated inside the church in the south aisle.



Once again look to your immediate right. There you will see a collapsed cross shaft. The name on the base is Ebeneezer Pike. Ebeneezer was an early victim of the troubles in Ireland. In 1921 he was a Protestant living at Kilcrenagh House in a Catholic area (Cork). When he refused to pay the IRA 'Arms Fund Tax', 20-30 of the local armed IRA paid him a 'visit'. They burned his home and injured his family, threatening to shoot them. They then stole his prized cattle. The very next day, 27th May, Ebeneezer and his family relocated to England for their safety and in 1922 moved to Pishiobury House. They never returned to Ireland. Ebeneezer was a benefactor to the local cricket club, the scouts and guides.

Ebeneezer Pike 1853 – 1931

Continue around the church anticlockwise for 5 metres. Look to the right, next to the prominent 'Churchill' grave is an inconspicuous marker with a military badge. Go over to it. This is the grave of Harold Douglas Bryan. He was a professional soldier who fought throughout WW1. Amazingly, there is no record of him becoming wounded. He seems to have been one of a very lucky few.

Now continue off 45' to the right for about 5 metres. This comes to the grave of Alizon Cutforth. She was the first born of Sir Arthur Cutforth (later another daughter was born, also named Alizon). Sir Arthur was another 'local hero'. There is a Blue Plaque to him at to council offices because he did SO much for the town. Sir Arthur was one of the founders of the local Sports Association.

Continue straight ahead and you come to the 'Non-Conformist Corner'. Sawbridgeworth was known for having many 'non-con' families. It was so bad that Charles Pole who was the vicar 1691-1716 formally complained to the Bishop of London about non-payment of tithes.

Here is to be found the large chest tomb of the Unwin family. The Unwin family were brewers and owned the Imperial and Griffin breweries in London. The family also purchased an inn called the Green Man. This was converted into their family house which still exists in Sheering Mill Lane.

Next to this chest is a grave bearing the name of Hawkes. The Hawkes family, owned Hawkes' brewery in Bishop's Stortford. This was later purchased by Benskin's brewery in 1916 and was demolished in 1994.

As you are about to return to the War Memorial, look to your right at the gravestones piled against the boundary. In 1817, Thomas Hutchinson became the vicar at Great St Mary's. From then until his death in 1856 he progressed with much needed repairs. However, one of the things he also did was to remove many of the gravestones. If you know where to look, you can still see some elsewhere around the town.

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