

# The COBBOLD Family History Trust

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Patron: Lord Cobbold DL

## ST. MARY'S CHURCH WOOLPIT

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Lightning struck on 17<sup>th</sup> July 1852 and destroyed the spire of St. Mary's, a rare Suffolk church built between 1439 and 1451 which amongst many fine features boasts a spectacular Perpendicular south porch and a superb medieval brass lectern.

John Spencer Cobbold (1768-1837) had been Rector there until his death and his widow Dorothy nee Homer (1770-1857) was at the forefront of the campaign to raise funds for its rebuilding. Her personal contribution was the publication in London of 'Domestic Rhymes' in 1856 a copy of which was loaned to the Trust recently. The list of subscribers includes amongst its 300 names members of all the families so closely associated with the Cobbolds and a postscript to the booklet tells us that 'The tower and spire have been rebuilt, the aisles repaired, and bells and clock replaced at the cost of £1943 and that Subscriptions and Collections had raised £1723 leaving a Deficiency of £220'

In his masterful book 'Guide to Churches & Cathedrals' Brian Harris tells us that 'St. Mary's stone spire, at 42.7m (140 feet) high, and rare in Suffolk, dominates the lovely countryside. It is supported by delicate flying buttresses.'

Dorothy was 86 at the time and claims to have written the book, 'in some measure to amuse her friends, edify her grandchildren, and relieve the monotony of her sightless and sleepless hours.' Here is one of her poems.



### **The Tour of the Tower**

Now hear what I've done;  
Enticed by my son,  
The Tour of the Tower I've achieved.  
By his hand kindly led.  
I did cautiously tread,  
By no danger or weariness grieved.

And first I explore  
The new belfry door,  
And its merits, though blind, I discern;  
Curiosity's spark  
Can illuminate the dark;  
From my guide the whole story I learn.

Now each buttress I span,  
Then mentally scan  
The whole noble fabric at once;  
Its breadth and its length,  
Its beauty and strength,  
And its grandeur I boldly pronounce.

In the country all round,  
No spire can be found  
To compete with the one we have raised;  
For the means we've enjoy'd,  
And the skill we've employ'd  
God's goodness for ever be praised.

May the Spirit of Grace  
Abide in this place,  
Our souls to refresh and expand;  
May faith, hope, and love,  
Descend from above,  
To bless and ennoble our land.

#### **Postscript**

Sadly, St. Mary's became the victim of lead thieves in July 2007 and thousands of pounds worth was removed from the roof.

Anthony Cobbold

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