

## **Religious Troubles. Edward VI and Bloody Mary.**

The two reigns following that of Henry VIII totalled only eleven years. This short period saw the pendulum of religious difference swing wildly between Protestantism and Catholicism.

Edward VI.

1547- Henry was succeeded by Edward VI (the Boy King) who was eight when he came to the throne. Influenced by his protestant advisors he made major changes which affected religious traditions including church buildings and services. Commissioners were appointed to oversee the destruction of anything related to Roman Catholicism and inventories had to be made so that things of value could be seized.

In St Mary's the effects of Edward's commands were devastating. When the order came to remove the rood loft panels they were saved, hidden, and later fitted under the pews to act as draught excluders. They are still there today as is the entrance to the rood loft staircase.

All statues of saints were either removed or defaced unless they were shown performing miracles. To show reluctance to carry out these orders was extremely dangerous and much of historical importance was lost, but the windows and medieval bells escaped.

### [A story of the desecration of St Mary's, Lakenheath](#)

*By Sarah Brady, produced by Suffolk Archives with the assistance of Lakenheath Heritage Group and St. Mary's Parish Church.*

In 1549 the first Book of Common Prayer laid down the approved form of service. Eventually this formed the basis of the Church of England liturgy. Priests were now allowed to marry.

*Munday*

After Edward died Queen Jane Grey a Protestant reigned for 9 days before being deposed in favour of Queen Mary Tudor. She was executed age 16/17 in the Tower of London.

1553- When she came to the throne Queen Mary Tudor (often called Bloody Mary) not only restored traditional Roman Catholicism and reversed all the religious changes of Edward's reign, but also began to persecute those who wished to follow the Book of Common Prayer. Many wealthy Protestants fled the country and those that remained were at great risk of execution.

During her reign there were executions across England including Thetford, Beccles, and many in Bury St. Edmunds. It's known that about 300 people were executed, most by burning at the stake including both ordinary folk and important bishops.

*Wikipedia*

About this time the medieval strip field patterns became to change as tenant farmers acquired more land, making possible larger flocks of sheep which also meant that fewer labourers were needed\*.

Traces of medieval fields could still be found here until relatively recently.

\*Also see the Poor Laws.

*Munday*

In 1541 ROBERT UPTON became the vicar of Lakenheath. As far as we can tell he was here until 1557 (died?) and would have witnessed the religious turbulence of the reigns of Edward and Mary. He must have had an extremely difficult life. He probably lived in the early vicarage which was on the High Street where numbers 64 and 66 are now.