

ESSEX SOCIETY FOR FAMILY HISTORY

NORTH WEST BRANCH

REPORT on ST. MARY'S BAPTISM PROJECT

ELIZABETHAN & STUART PERIOD

1558-1629/30 (OVER 6300 RECORDS)

September 2020 report.

In June 2019 it was agreed that our Branch would undertake the task of transcribing the baptisms of St. Mary's Church from the very first register commencing in 1558. The Essex Record Office (ERO) hold the original register on their SEAX system under their D/P reference code: D/P 192/1/1. Since many of the entries are difficult to read it became obvious that we could work from the images of the Victorian Transcripts held in the Church Archives. John Read was tasked with obtaining special permission to borrow the Victorian register for the purpose of photocopying all 190 pages. Since the register was in large format (often with more than 34 entries on each page), the Baptist Church kindly agreed, at no charge, to the use of their large photocopying machine for that purpose, and this was completed last summer.

Although a very useful framework, the original Victorian transcribers' use of abbreviations & modern name spellings meant that many transcripts have had to be cross-checked with the primary register.

After our 2019 AGM, the Secretary commenced transcribing & uploading the records to an Excel spreadsheet. He then printed out all the records in time for our March 2020 meeting. At that meeting (one week before the Government's "lockdown") a small group of volunteers undertook the verification process by checking the photocopied entries to the computer printouts. A massive 2,300 entries were completed by the end of the evening. With the introduction of the official "lockdown" Lesley Furlong volunteered to continue the verification process at home and this she completed by the end of the month.

This now concludes the St. Mary's Baptism Project which commenced in January 2010, and brings the total number of entries completed by the Branch to more than 19,300, from March 1558 to March 1814. Branch volunteers will need to agree at their next meeting how to make the new entries available to researchers.

Note: Copies of the original images (1630-1814) together with photocopies of this register are held in paper form at the Access Point in Saffron Walden Library. The database printouts are also filed with the images.

Michael Furlong

Secretary. September 2020