On the north wall of what used to be called 'Battles' Chapel', now the vestry of St Mary's Church, Manuden, is a large, elaborate tablet extolling the virtues of Sir William Waad who lived at Battles Hall, Manuden from 1586 to 1623.
William was the eldest surviving son of Armigel Waad, a Yorkshireman and an interesting character. Armigel had been educated at Oxford, studied law in the Inns of Court in London, and in April 1536 set sail from Gravesend in the *Mignon*. In two months he reached America and was back at St Ives, Cornwall, by October after a memorable journey. Some have called him the 'English Columbus' crediting him with landing in America before Gilbert or Raleigh, but of course many other people had travelled there before him. Upon return from this adventure, Armigel entered State Service under Henry VIII and rose to become an MP, Chief Clerk of the Council and secretary to Sir William Cecil who was the principal Secretary of State.

William was born in 1546, probably in Calais where his father was posted at the time, and before inheriting his family’s estate in Hampstead, Bellasis (now Belsize), and other mainly London properties, he too did his share of travelling. After a few years at Gray's Inn to train in law, he visited France and Italy to learn the secret arts of espionage before returning to England in 1583 to become one of Clerks of the Privy Council. In this role he was sent on various diplomatic missions. Indeed in Madrid he incurred the wrath of King Philip of Spain and was lucky to escape alive.

In 1584 he attempted to obtain a reconciliation between Mary Queen of Scots and Queen Elizabeth I, but failed in this mission. However, the following year it was William Waad who provided the fatal evidence that was to send Mary Queen of Scots to the scaffold for her part in the Babington Plot against Elizabeth. The Scottish Queen was considered by Catholics to be the rightful heir to the English throne. Of her 19 years spent in this country every one was spent in imprisonment, being moved from one manor house or castle to another. One of her keepers was local Hertfordshire man, Sir Ralph Sadleir, who held the Lordship of Standon and built a substantial house there, some of which still exists.

After James I came to the throne William continued to rise in importance and was knighted in 1603. During much of his time as Clerk to the Privy Council he was involved in finding and persecuting the catholic community on behalf of the State, work which often involved the use of espionage and counter-espionage. In 1601 he prepared an account of the Earl of Essex’s rebellion. He also conducted Sir Walter Raleigh to Winchester for his trial and became Lieutenant of the Tower of London in August 1605, just a few months before he had to deal with the perpetrators of the Gunpowder Plot. It was Sir William Waad who supervised the torture of Guy Fawkes, and it is William’s name that appears alongside Fawkes' distorted signature on the fateful document.

He was eventually ousted from his position at the Tower in 1613 shortly after his patron, and protector, Sir Robert Cecil died. He then came to live out his years in Manuden. During the time he was working in London there
are frequent references to his 'little farm in Essex' (Battles Hall Farm) which he seems to have used as a bolt-hole when life became too difficult. William was a diligent and hardworking servant on behalf of the State who pursued his quarry doggedly. These characteristics gave him a fearsome reputation as a persecutor of Catholics and hated figure in many circles. He was especially diligent in his persecution of a neighbour in Manuden, Thomas Crowley who lived at Manuden Hall. William Waad regarded him as one of the most obstinate and unyielding of Popish recusants in the whole country. Crowley suffered years of not only fines but many years of imprisonment. In the returns of recusants for the Diocese of London made in 1577 he appeared with his wife Margaret. He was presented to the Quarter Sessions for absenting himself from church for 20 years or more.

William inherited Battles Hall, Manuden from his first wife, Ann Waller, who was the daughter of a wealthy London merchant, and a member of the Guild of Fishmongers. As she was only 15 years old, and William closer to 40 years, it is likely that the dowry of property played a large part in William’s selection of a bride. The unfortunate girl was to live only three years before dying in childbirth. As soon as William had gained possession of Battles Hall he appears to have started a rebuilding programme which moved the house from the central area, which was moated on three sides, to a different location beside the moat. It is likely that the original house was in poor condition at the time, because even in the 1970s there was still considerable evidence of tile and brick scatter in what is now the garden of the existing house. The circumstances of William’s second marriage to Anne Brown are chronicled by Richard Symonds, an historian, who upon inspection of Manuden Church in September 1639 wrote: ‘Sir William Waad had fifteen children by his second lady, to whom he swore marriage if she would swear that ye child she then went withal, was of his begettting, and he married her... None of all these fifteen but had some imperfection. Those that were strait and handsome were dumb or deaf, those of them that could speake were lame or crooked...’

Despite this assurance, according to the records William did not marry Anne Browne until 1599, two years after the birth of daughter Abigail on 21 January 1597. No further writings have surfaced concerning these ‘imperfect’ children. However, of these fifteen, we know that Armigiel who was born in 1603, died on 4 November 1611, aged seven years at the Tower of London where his father was Lieutenant Governor. The fact that William made a special note of this event in his diary, whereas no other children are mentioned, suggests that the boy may have been his first son and heir. James, probably the second son, was born in 1611, and through this line the house and manor descended to his son William.

Sir William Waad’s other known children include: Abigail, wife of John Whorwood of Compton Staffordshire; Armenia Gildea who married Charles Mordaunt of Thunderley, Essex (the Mordaunts were an ancient family
descended from the Royal House of Plantagenet); Jane, possibly unmarried, who was buried at Hampstead in December 1632; Alice, who became the second wife of Philip Cage of Great Hornead. They were married in Stocking Pelham Church on 6 December, 1621, probably the last family event William was able to attend. Elizabeth who married Edmund Lenthall, and Mary, baptised October 1614, who married John Holgate of Saffron Walden. The Holgate family's splendid, black marble ledger stones are positioned at the top of the steps inside the main entrance (west end) in Saffron Walden church. Their inscriptions, mostly in Latin, record the family history, including daughter Mary Holgate's marriage to James Monteith of Greenwich, Scotland. Mary was the daughter of Mary Waad and John Holgate.

In the later part of his retirement William spent more time at Battles Hall Farm, but continued his public work officiating at the Essex Quarter Sessions. Poor health plagued him towards the end of his life and we find him excused from duties in 1618, but sitting in court in 1620 with Lord Maynard. He dealt with a case concerning Edward Wymble of Chrishall for erecting a cottage on the lord’s waste. And as if this were not crime enough, he was also found to be keeping a house of bawdery there, as well as thieving from customers.

In his old age William seems to have mellowed as he appears to have spent some time assisting in local disputes. An elderly man, John Person, from the neighbouring parish of Farnham, had once been a stalwart of the church and was even a churchwarden in 1598. Then he stopped going to church and had been excommunicated by his vicar. By now he was a poor, old, blind and repentant man who longed to return to the spiritual comfort of the church. He was unable to pay the fine of 12 pence demanded by the churchwardens. A number of local people drew up a petition in his support. The local vicar, Mr Symons, refused to give way unless he was presented with an official, sealed letter from other local vicars and William was asked to intervene. He appealed on John Person's behalf and asked the vicar of Elsenham to write an official letter which would encourage Symons to submit to the will of the parishioners.

It is clear from William's last Will and Testament that he made some good friends in this part of Essex. There was Mr Thomas Thompson from Berden, Mr Maurice Parson of Pelham, and it seems that he was friendly with the vicar of Manuden at the time, Israel Thornell, who was nominated to execute Sir William's will and left £4 in silver plate for his trouble. The parish records carry this report by him: 'My loving and dear friend buryed the 21st October' (1623). The grave is most likely in the north-west corner of the transept of St Mary's, Manuden, facing toward Battles Hall, as requested by William Waad in his testament, although there is now no indication of where the tomb was located.
The elaborate monument to Sir William Waad on the north wall of Battles Chapel, in Latin, lists his various diplomatic posts and likens his life the 'Watch of State'. The writer of the memorial uses the device of an Elizabethan conceit to compare the life of Sir William to a national clock where accuracy can be trusted. The minutes of his life were spent on religious thought, his hours doing good deeds, and his main thought was always the good of the kingdom and safety of its sovereign. Although ambitious he could never be persuaded or bribed to do evil and died with a clear conscience. His zeal kept him wound up liked a coiled spring on earth so that at his death he would be elevated straight to heaven.

You that place and charge from princes trust
Whom honors maye make thankfull not unjust
Drawe neare and set your conscience and your care
By this true watch of state whose minutes were
Religious thoughts, whose howers heaven's sacred foode,
Whose hand still pointed to the kingdom's good
And soveraignes safetie, whom ambition's key
Never woond up guiltiness bribe or fee
Zeal only and a conscience clear and even
Raysed him on earth and woond him up to heaven

The monument was in a poor state of repair in the late 1800s, and was restored about this time by William de Vins Wade Esq of Great Dunmow, Essex, a family descendant.

William Waad’s wife Anne survived her husband by 22 years. James, the eldest son was 19 years old when his father died. He married Frances, daughter of Sir Edward Eltonhead by whom he had two children, Anne born 1644 and William born 1645. Their daughter Anne later became Lady Anne Baesh when she married Sir Edward Baesh of Stanstead Abbots in 1673. James died in January 1659 and was buried at Hampstead Church with his grandfather Armigel, and his widow married again in 1661 to Sir Joseph Douglas. In 1671 the Hearth Tax on Battles Hall was paid by Sir Joseph Douglas, so it would appear that he still had an interest in the house at this time.

The son of James and Frances was William, born in October 1645. He was 14 years old when his father died. At 20 he married Anne Barlee of Clavering. They had two children, both of whom died under age with no offspring of their own. James became Captain of Trained Bands, a sort of home-guard, and was murdered in Manuden in July 1677 following a gambling dispute. His son William, was born in December 1665 in Clavering where the young couple had lived with the Barlee family. He died in October 1686 aged 20. His sister Anne died in 1691, also aged 20. She had smallpox. This was the end of the direct line as far as we are aware.

Sir William Waad was raised as a committed Protestant, and lived out his life during a tumultuous religious period of history. His reputation is that
of a dogged, determined man, driven by his belief in ridding the state of the Catholics he hated so much. He walked on the world stage during this quest, but ended his life in the sleepy village of Manuden which is where I first discovered him, through his monument in the vestry of Manuden church.

**NOTE:** A book based on Sir William Waad is available – for details please contact: fiona.bengtsen@btinternet.com

### Notes

- ERO T/A714 Prob. 11/142 Will of Sir William Waad
- Holman William, Manuscript History of Essex.
- Manuden Parish Records 1560 onwards.
- PRO PROB 11/46 Will of Sir Humphrey Browne.
- PRO PROB 11/52 Will of Armigel Waad.
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