

# Romsey, England

Ancestral homeland of the Knight Family

# Farewell to Romsey

- 1635 John and Mary Pickering Knight left Romsey, England for America
- They made their home in the Boston area
- John was a tailor by profession
- They brought four children including our ancestor, John Knight, Jr.





## Romsey, England

- The Knight home town was a very old market town in Hampshire
- It was the home of the beautiful Romsey Abbey
- It was built on the Test River, which gave it access to the port of South Hampton. (And has excellent fly fishing for trout.)
- About 8 miles northwest of the significant port of South Hampton
- Romsey is about 85 miles southwest of London

**From Joseph Knight, Sr. back to his ancestors in Romsey:**

Joseph Knight, Sr. – b. 1772, Oakham, Vermont, md. Polly Peck

Benjamin Knight – b. 1744, Sudbury, Mass., md. Sarah Crouch

Samuel Knight – b. 1709, Charlestown, Mass., md. Anne Eames

Samuel Knight, Sr. - b. 1675, Charlestown, Mass., md. Rachel Chase

John Knight – b.1630, Romsey, England, md. Mary Bridge

John Knight, Sr. – b. 1601, Romsey, England, md. Mary Pickering

Nicholas Knight – b. 1570, Romsey, England, md. Jane Hewett

William Knight – b. 1547, Romsey, England, md. Elizabeth Wild

John Knight – b. 1515, Romsey, England, md. Katherine Wild

John Knight, b. 1490, Romsey, England, md. Maude

*“Guardian of the Church”*

***\*Church Records in Romsey still exist back to 1538.***

# England Invaded

Romsey was close to the southern edge of England and was invaded many times over the centuries:

- Ceasar brought armies in 55 BC
- 5<sup>th</sup> Century Germanic Saxons invaded Britain and established villages
- 597 St. Augustine brought Christianity to Britain and Anglo-Saxon people
- 827 England was unified under Saxon King Egbert.

In 907 the 6<sup>th</sup> King of England, King Edward the Elder, built an Abbey in Romsey, and his daughter Elfaeda was the first Abbess, or head of the convent. Romsey Abbey made the town a place of royal significance.



# 994 A.D. - Vikings invade Romsey

While praying one day, The Abbess of Romsey Abby had a vision of Danes attacking and burning her church. She gathered her nuns and fled to the neighboring town 15 miles away. The Vikings did come and the church and buildings were burned. But no nuns were lost, and in time, Romsey Abbey was rebuilt.





King Edgar in 960 re-established the Romsey church as a Benedictine order, and it became a seat of learning, especially for the children, boys and girls, of nobility.

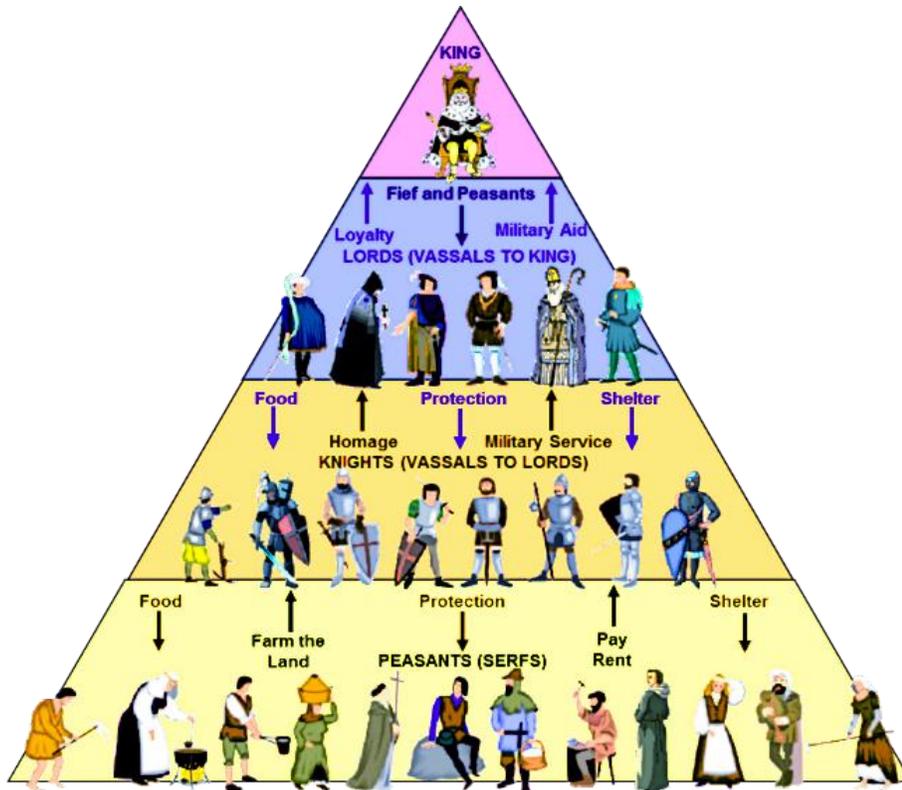
The King also sent his step-daughter to Romsey, Ethelflaeda. She was a humble devout girl, a worker of miracles, and literate.

As a nun she was a teacher of aristocratic children like herself. In 1000 Ethelflaeda became Abbess at Romsey.

In 1086 the King's Domesday Survey that showed the Abbey owned extensive land in Romsey and neighboring towns.

# 1066 – William the Conqueror took over England

- William, Duke of Normandy II, became King William of England.
- Old French became the language of the royalty
- This is important to our family because William established the British Monarchy with its lines of nobility and KNIGHTS!



In 1100 the King granted Romsey permission to hold a town market one day a week.

A market is a significant step for a village at that time. It meant there was a cash economy instead of barter. Jobs were created in shops.

Access to a river and roads increased the marketability of things produced in Romsey as well as things that could be sold in the market.

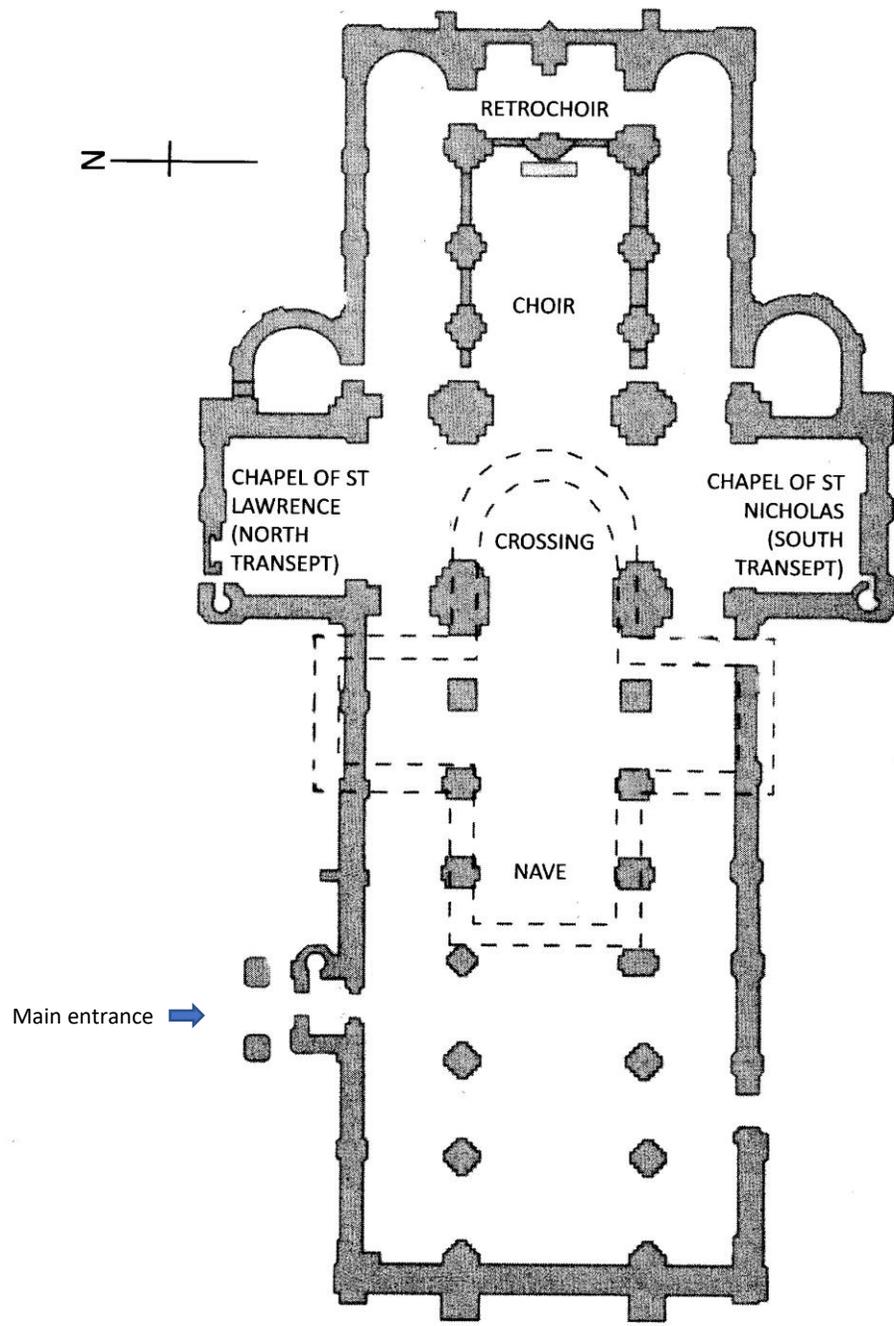


Test River near Romsey



Romsey Abbey

The Normans who took over the rule of England started to rebuild the old Saxon churches, including the small stone church in Romsey. In 1120, the work on Romsey Abbey began. The town of Romsey probably had only 1200 residents when this church was built.



Romsey Abbey was rebuilt in Romanesque style with stone brought in from the Isle of Wight. It took 20 years.

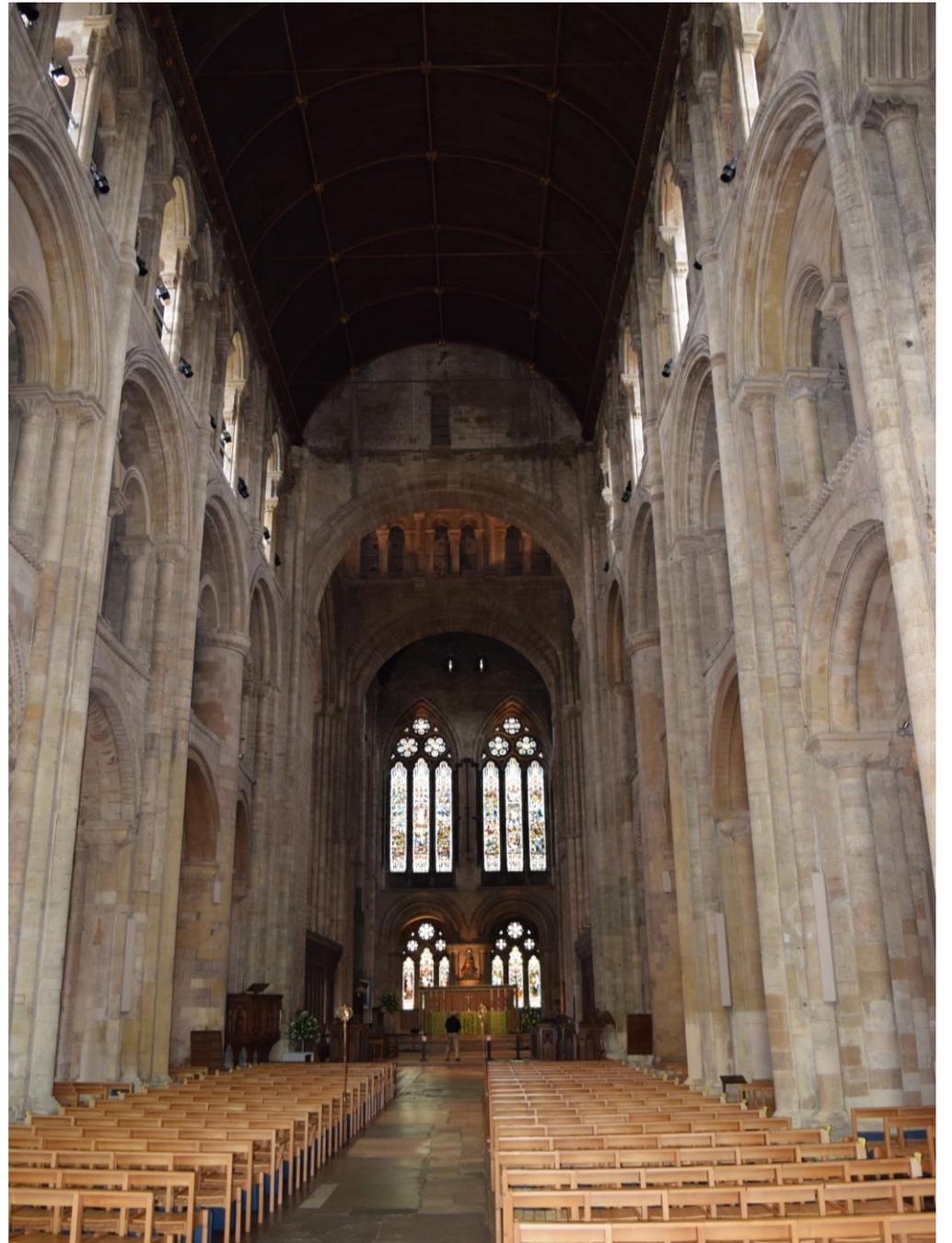
It was designed as a cruciform church, shaped like a cross. It is 210 feet long with the transept being 105 feet wide.

The nave, or main body of the church where the worshippers sat is 35 feet wide. Walls are 70 feet tall.

The main entrance is on the north side toward the west end.

Adjoining buildings with living quarters housed 100 nuns.

Master stone masons and wood carvers gave the new Romsey Abbey magnificent details and beauty.

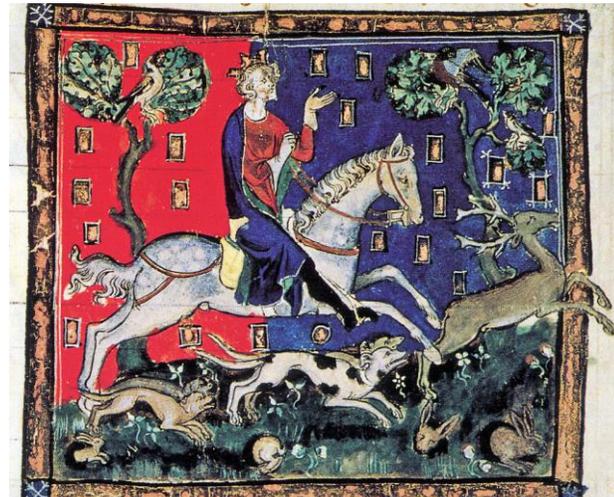




King John, the man who signed the Magna Carta, had a daughter who lived in Romsey to attend school at the Abbey. The King had well documented visits to Romsey in 1200, 1206, 1210, and probably came other times as well.



Folklore has it that this was King John's hunting lodge in Romsey, and that he also kept a mistress here. There were thick woods full of game surrounding Romsey in 1210.



The Abbey continued to acquire property and the beautiful Romsey Abbey became a fashionable nunnery for single women and widows to join. The well-to-do women did not have the Benedictine work ethic and the Abbess had to hire men to work on Abbey-owned farms and estates.

The population of the town in the mid 1500s was about 1500. The wool industry was very important in the Middle Ages to the town economy, and at least three mills were built on the river.





John Knight, sometimes spelled Knyght in Old English, was a prosperous man in Romsey in the early 1500s. He lived in Roke Manor and employed many people to work his land.

In 1526 the plague hit Romsey for the second time. In 1348 the plague had wiped out half of the population of the town and facing it again was a fearful thing. King Henry VIII cancelled his trip to visit the town that year.

Knight ancestors, obviously, survived the devastating disease; John Knight, the son of John Knight of Roke Manor, married Katherine Wild in Romsey, the next year in 1527.

In 1533, King Henry VIII wanted to divorce his wife Catherine to marry Anne Boleyn. He was angry and wanted a new wife who would produce a male heir, and the Pope would not grant him an annulment so he could marry someone else.

King Henry VIII severed ties with the Catholic Church and had himself declared the Head of the Church of England by Parliament. All church owned lands and buildings including monasteries and convents were seized, including Romsey Abbey and all its lands.





After 600 years as a convent, in 1539 the Romsey Abbey was closed. King Henry VIII closed and confiscated 800 church properties in England. Many monasteries and convents were demolished. All the Romsey Abbey owned buildings except the church were torn down.



This is Tintern Abbey, one of the many sold or destroyed by King Henry VIII in England, Wales and Ireland between 1540 and 1544.



The community petitioned the king and asked to buy the Romsey Abbey church to use as their Parish Church within the Church of England. The king agreed.

Four men came forward with the 100 pounds that were required to buy the Romsey Abbey. A stone on the floor of the nave records the names of the four guardians of the church who saved the building:

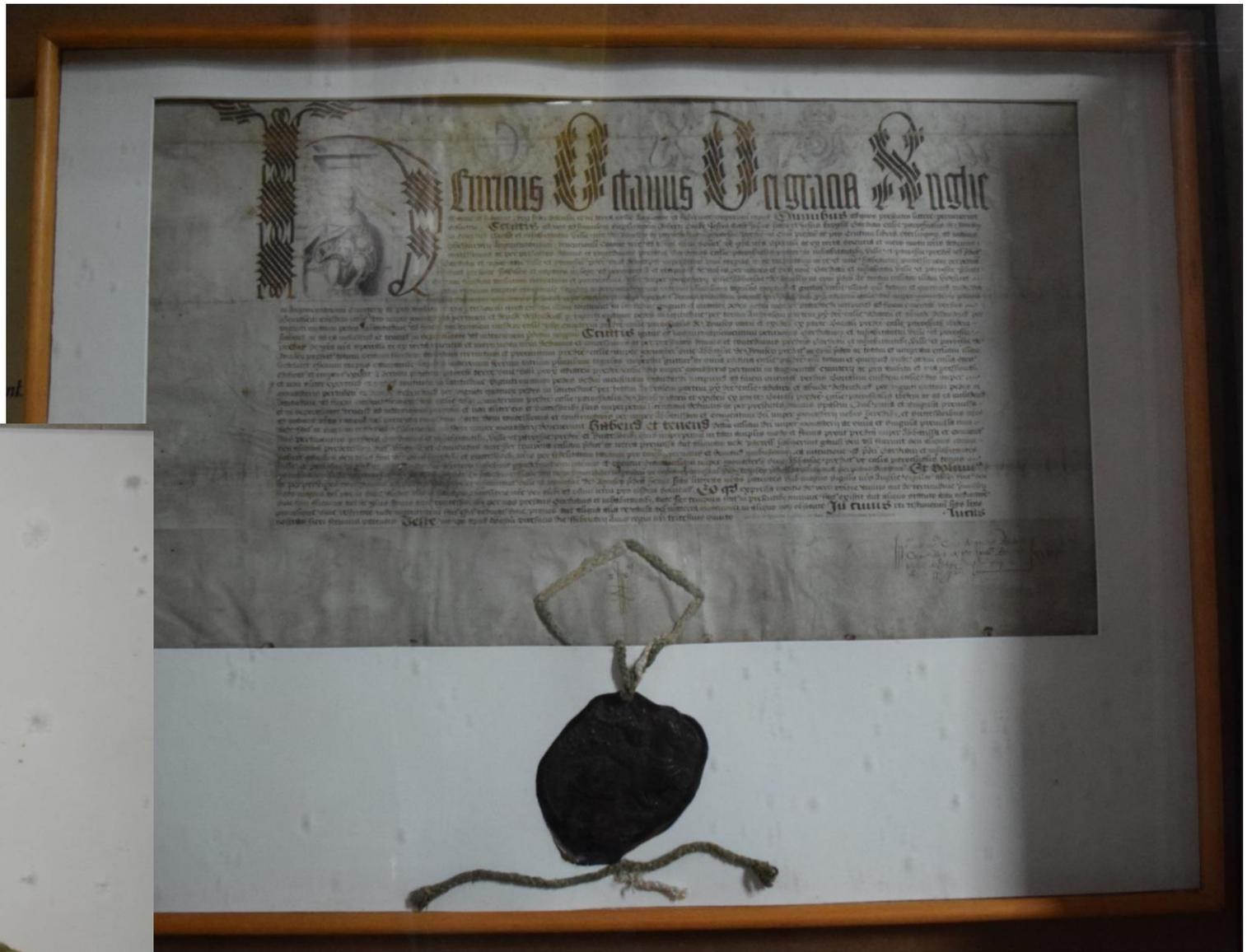
- John Ham
- John Salt
- Robert Cooke
- John Knyght

John Knyght is John Knight, the 7<sup>th</sup> great-grandfather of Joseph Knight, Sr. born in Vermont.



John Knight Mangum and Elizabeth Hallett, Romsey Abbey historian stand near the stone honoring John Knight as a guardian of the church.

The Bill of Sale for Romsey Abbey signed by Henry VIII in 1544 with his Royal Seal attached to the bottom, is on display in the Abbey.





Romsey Abbey is still a beautiful house of worship today –  
The Altar of Romsey Abbey

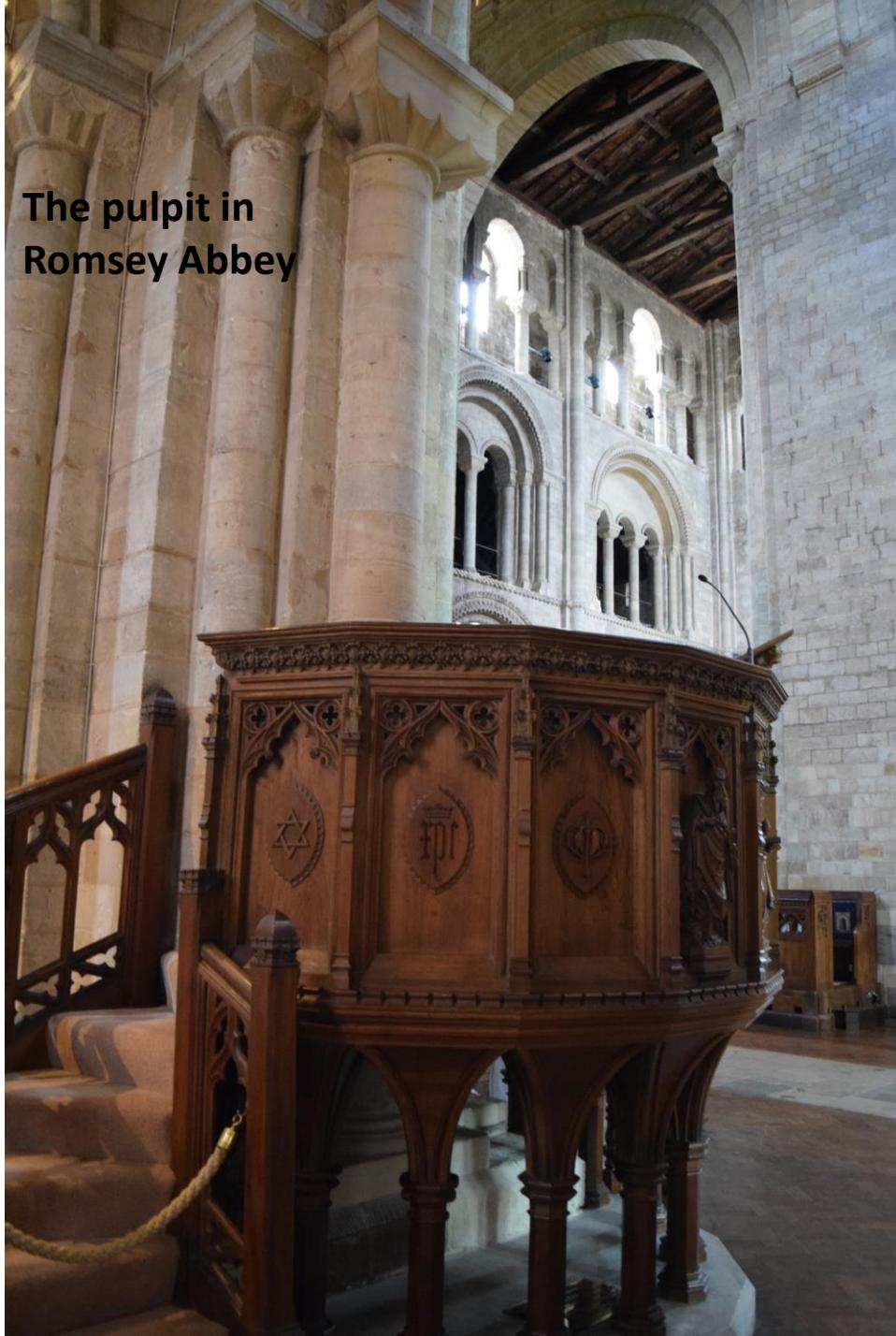


In this entrance to a side chapel one can see the details in the stone work



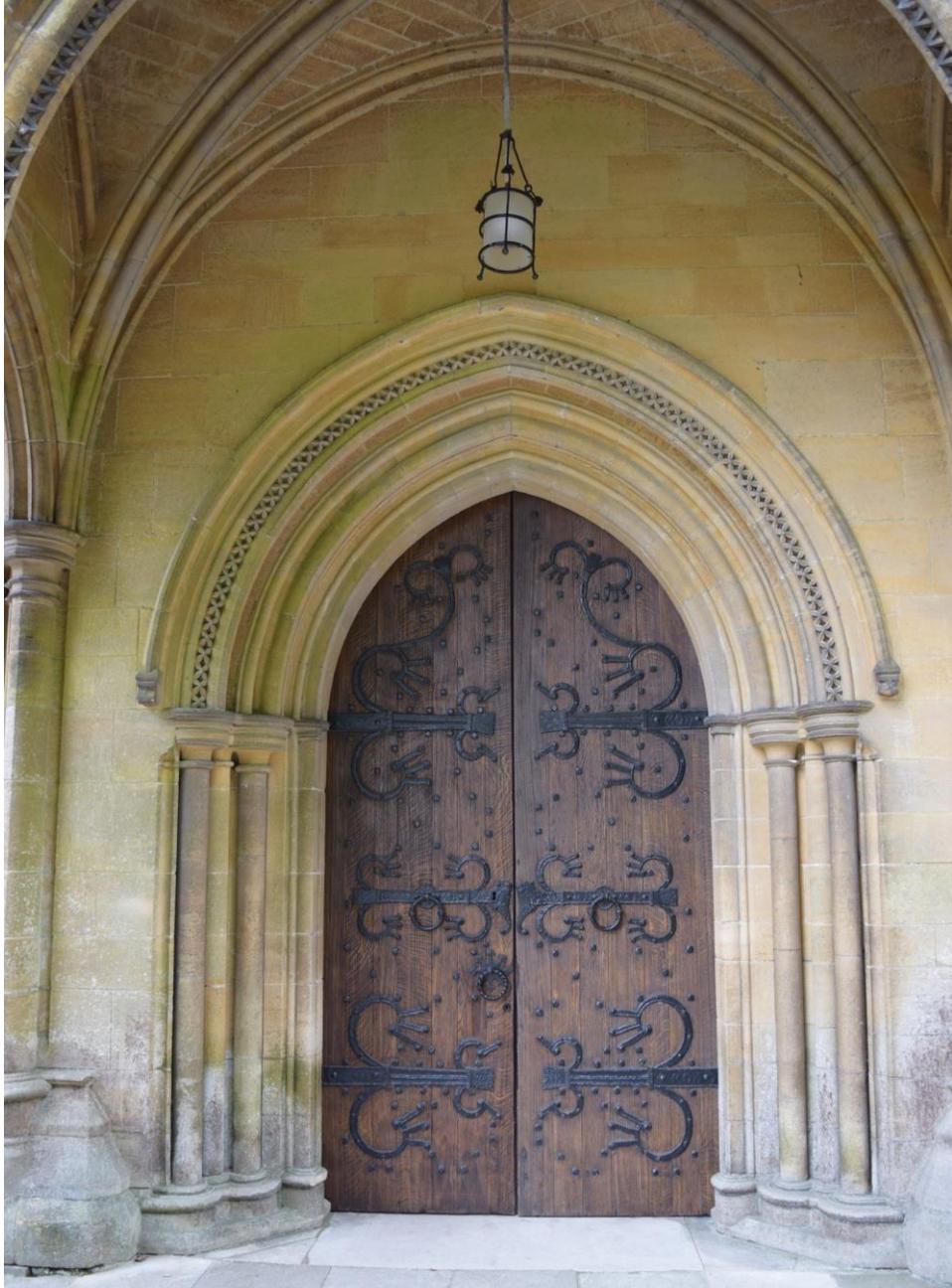
The baptismal font near the main entrance. It is not original to the church.

The pulpit in  
Romsey Abbey

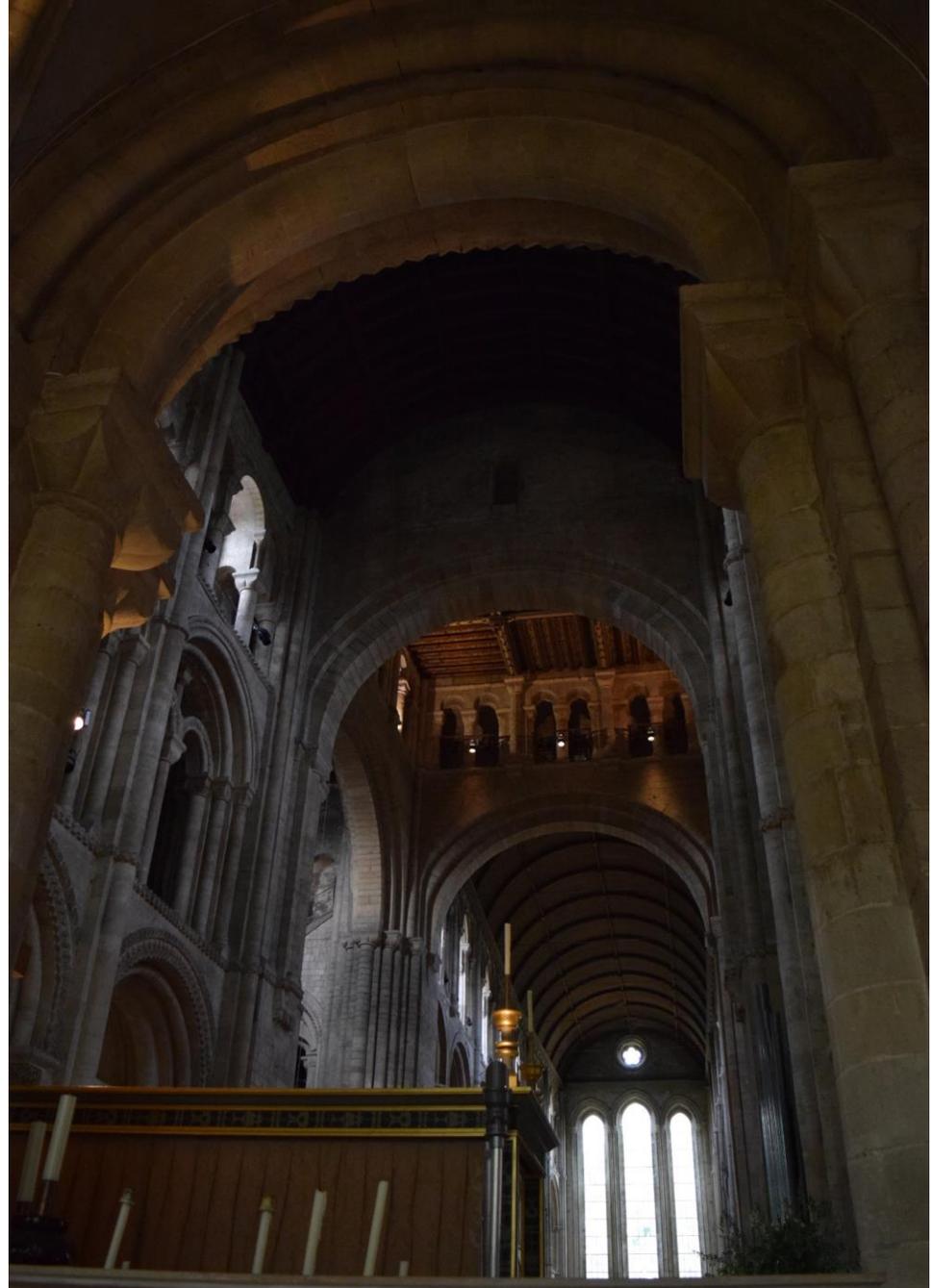


Inside the main  
door of the Abbey





Main door to the Abbey



The Nave ceiling



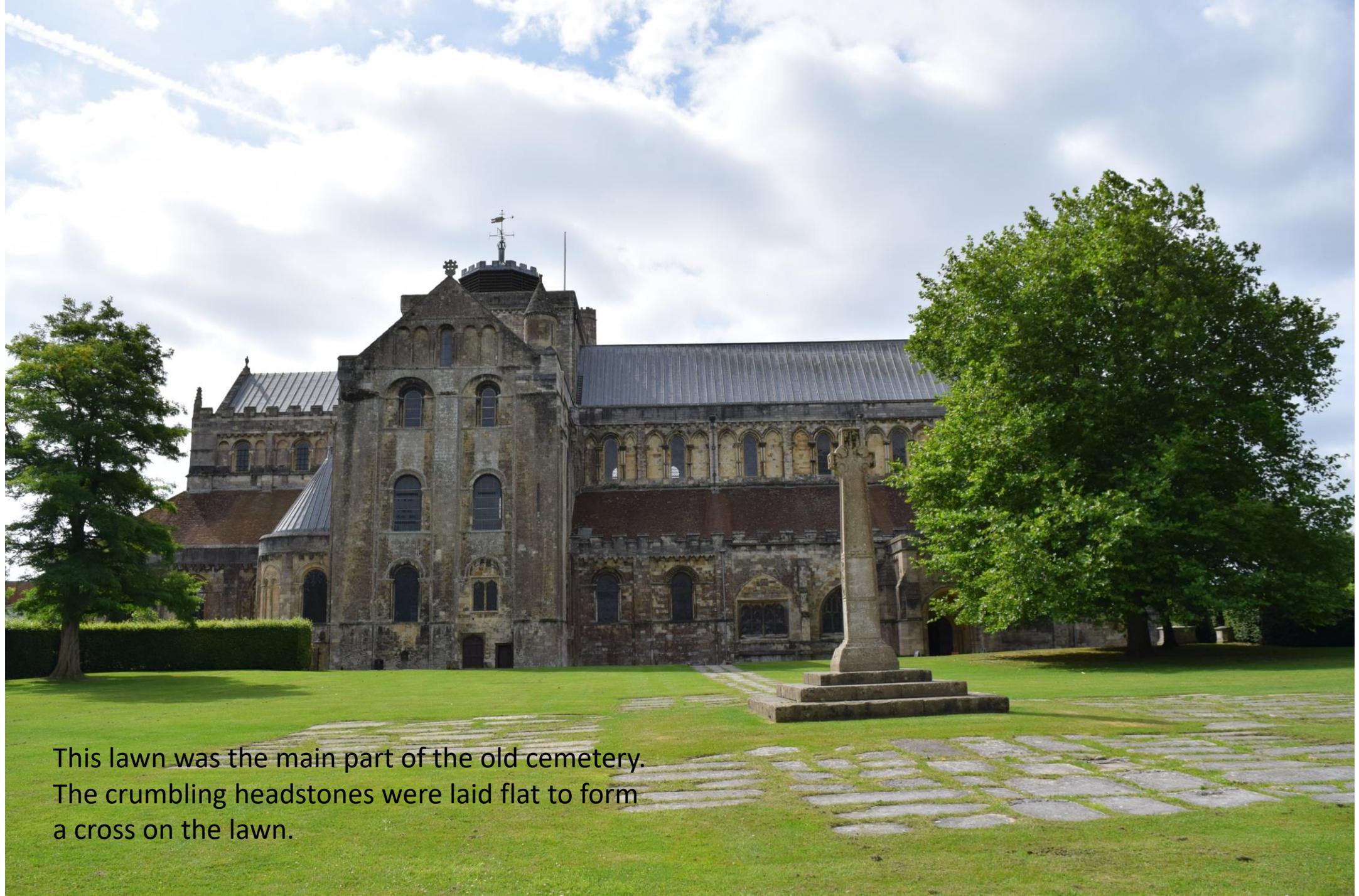


West end of Romsey Abbey



Old headstones near the door.





This lawn was the main part of the old cemetery. The crumbling headstones were laid flat to form a cross on the lawn.

Path in the shape of a cross made of old headstones. The cemetery was closed about 1850.



Romsey Abbey is only 100 yards and around the corner from the heart of the town.

The Tudor Rose Pub and Inn was built in Romsey 15 years before John Knight, the guardian of the church, was even born in 1490.

Inns were established to house the visitors to the children attending the Abbey School.





An old home a block from  
the Romsey Abbey

This is the town seal.

101 years after John Knight helped to save the Romsey Abbey from destruction by the King, his great grandson, John Knight, gathered up his wife and four children and left Romsey for America.

John and his wife Mary Pickering took their four young children to the Charleston, Massachusetts area to make a new home in 1635.

But, almost 400 years later, Romsey still exists and thrives in 2020.



Following slides will take you on a walk around the block near Romsey Abbey in 2016.





Home across the alley, perhaps a minister's home

A charming British home and garden.



Flowers line  
almost  
every front  
walkway.





This is a town that favors pedestrians.



Streets are very narrow at times.



And apparently there are some slower older folks.





Romsey is a clean, well-kept town

The White Horse is an old coaching Inn, still in use as a hotel today.

It was built in the 1700s and is now a four star hotel with a restaurant.

The coach way leads back to a courtyard where carriages and horses would be left. There was no street parking in the old days.





Lord Palmerston, the British Prime Minister from 1859 to 1865 under the reign of Queen Victoria is honored in the square in the center of the marketplace.

Some notable people who called Romsey their home town include:

Florence Nightingale, the mother of modern nursing. She was “The lady with the lamp” in the Crimea war in the 1850s.

Reverend Wilbert Awdry, a clergy man and author who wrote the series of children books about Thomas the Tank Engine.

Laura Carmichael, actress on Downton Abbey



Embley Park, just outside Romsey, is the estate and home of Florence Nightingale until her death in 1910. It is now a private school.



The Swan Inn is said to be haunted by two Roundhead soldiers who were hung from the iron sign bracket.



In the quiet evening streets of Romsey you can hear the bells from the Abbey.



And while eating some sticky toffee pudding in town, you may find another Knight Descendant at the table right next to you! We did! John Knight Mangum and a local Romsey citizen descended from John Knight, the “Guardian of Romsey Abbey.”