

Lovekyn Chapel



The Lovekyn Chapel in the 1930s

Edward Lovekyn was a prominent Kingston butcher and baker who, in 1299, provided the wedding feast for Edward I when he married Margaret of France. Though the King was delighted with the feast, it appears that he died without ever paying the bill. Lovekyn, who had long wanted to found a chantry chapel where prayers could be said for his soul after his death, used this as an excuse to approach the new king, Edward II, for permission to do so. In return for cancellation of the unpaid debt he received a royal licence to

found the Chapel of St Mary Magdalene outside the town on the London Road. It was built in 1309 and he endowed it with enough money to pay for a chaplain who would pray for the souls of the Lovekyn family.

Over the centuries the Chapel's fortunes have waxed and waned, with periods of neglect followed by restoration. John Lovekyn, Edward's son, richly endowed it, and drew up detailed rules about the services which should be said there. William Walworth, who took over Lovekyn's business on his death, made substantial grants in 1371. It is very possible that boys were trained as choristers in the chapel and provided with some rudimentary education. With the dissolution of the monasteries under Henry VIII daily worship at the chapel came to a dramatic end. The warden was executed in 1540; the chapel and its endowments forfeited to the crown, and Edward VI's Chantries Act formally abolished chantry chapels. Fortunately, the Chapel was not destroyed, and today it is the last surviving example of its kind in England.

Richard Taverner, as High Sherriff of Kingston under Edward VI, received the Chapel endowments and may have been instrumental in persuading Queen Elizabeth to establish a grammar school in the town. When she did so, in 1561, Queen Elizabeth I gave the Chapel to the new school, restoring all its former endowments. It has belonged to the School ever since. The names Walworth, Lovekyn, Taverner are, along with that of Queen Elizabeth herself, forever linked to the School Houses founded in 1914.