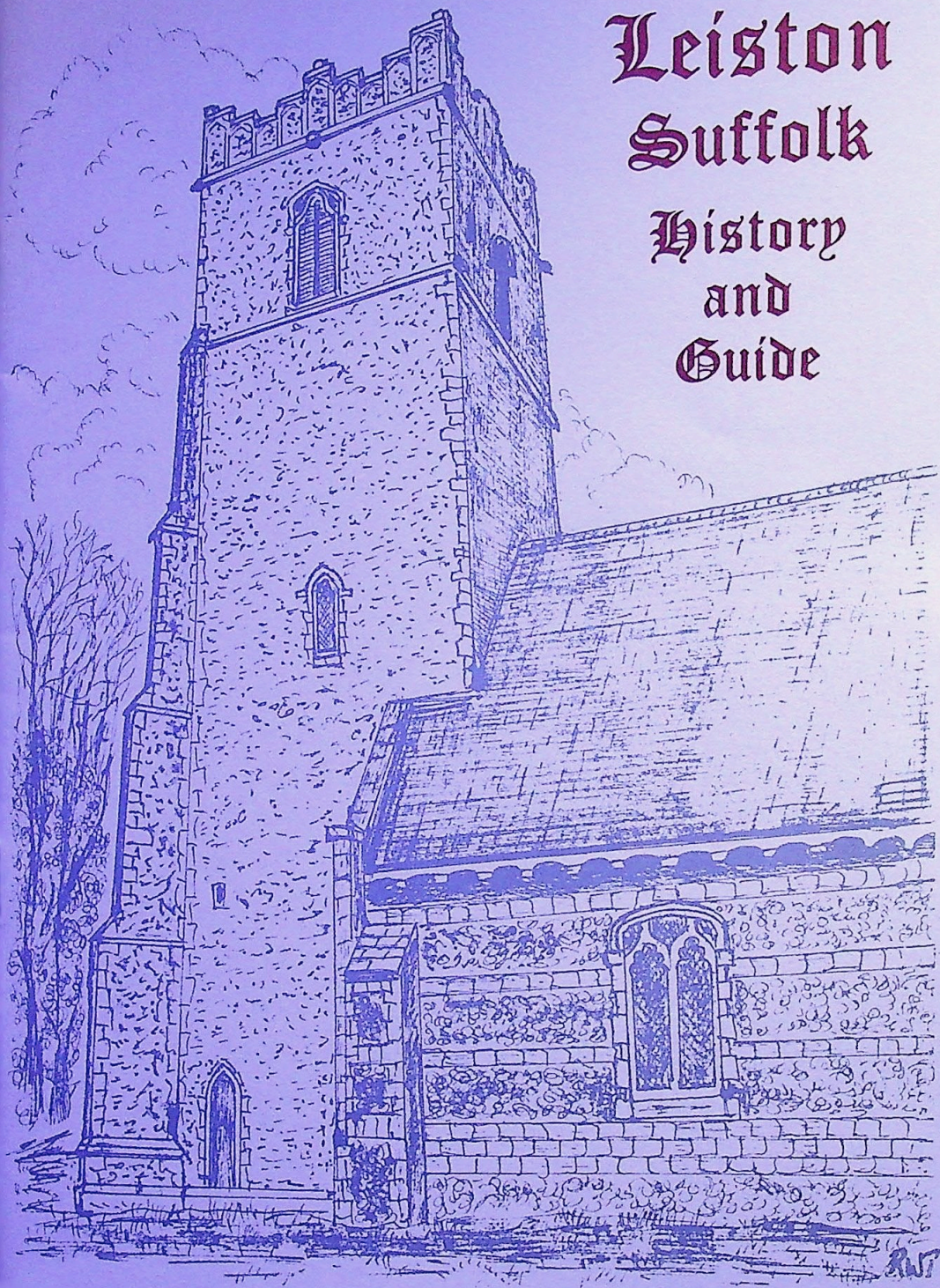


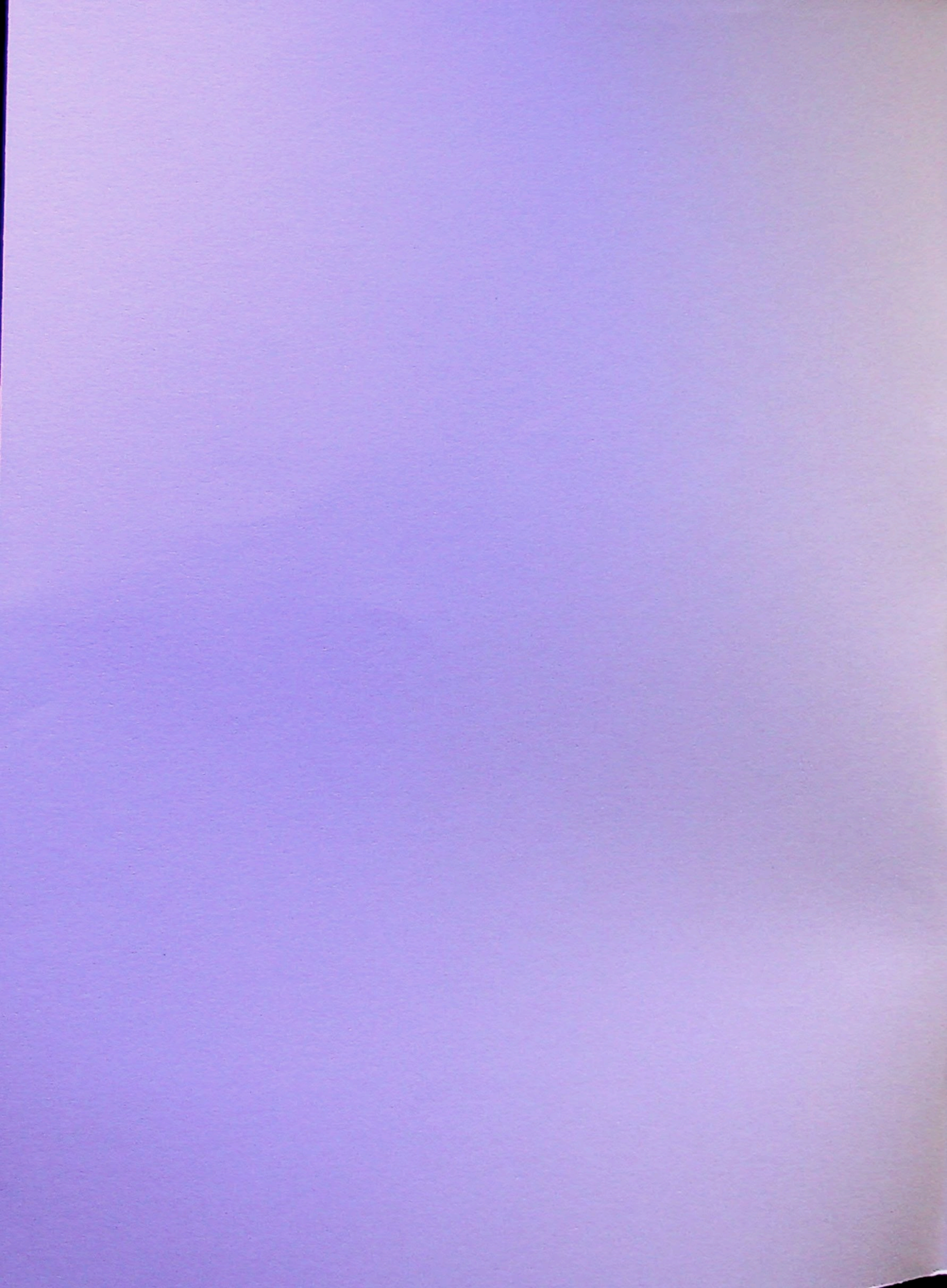
# St. Margaret's Church

Leiston

Suffolk

History  
and  
Guide





## WELCOME . . .

to this fascinating church, which is full of interesting and beautiful things. As you will see, it is neither a museum nor an ancient monument, but is a working building — in regular use for Christian Worship, which is the purpose for which it was first built many centuries ago.

Please feel at home here in our Father's House and enjoy its features of interest. It is a place where people of all faiths or of none may find peace and inspiration, and which Christians of all denominations can look upon as "Home"!

We hope that this booklet will help to show you some of its treasures and tell you something of its history. The first part traces some of the landmarks in its history and maybe you will prefer to digest this at home later. If so, please turn to Page 10 where the "Guide" section begins, describing what visitors can see today, both inside and outside the church. Producing the booklet in two sections like this has caused much necessary repetition, for which I apologise.

No visitor exploring St. Margaret's can fail to be aware of the love and care which is lavished upon it by its present-day Custodians. If you have time, please pray for the priest and people whose Spiritual Home this is, and who would welcome any contributions that their Visitors can spare which will help them keep this church intact and beautiful for future generations to use and to enjoy. Whether or not you are able to help in this way, we pray that God will bless you and we hope that you will come back and visit us again sometime.

In compiling this booklet, I have been greatly helped by accounts of the church by the late Mrs Irene Harling and Mrs Janice Pomp, also the advice of Mrs Cynthia Brown and the Rev'd John Drew, the wealth of data in the Suffolk County Record Office, and by the encouragement and hospitality of the Vicar, the Rev'd David Lowe. I am extremely grateful to these people for helping to make the task so fascinating and such fun!

**Roy Tricker**  
1990

## PREFACE

Roy Tricker refers above to the help he received in preparing this history and guide, particularly from the late Irene Harling. Irene's husband, Canon Bill Harling, was Vicar of Leiston from 1946 to 1960. This history is produced as a loving memorial to Irene. We are grateful to their son, John Harling, for suggesting this production as a fitting memorial to his mother, who is dearly held in the memory of St. Margaret's church.

We owe a considerable debt to Roy Tricker for the amount of work and hours put into this production. He did most of his research back in 1987. I am delighted that his efforts have at last come to fruition.

As this Guide is being prepared, the church is looking for a considerable amount of money for the restoration of this parish church building. The immediate work is to put our lid on properly! In other words, the roof is in urgent need of replacement. There is also much work to be done on the interior, on the organ, and to provide proper heating.

This Guide, then, will help towards raising money for these needs. If you wish to give further towards the upkeep of this building, we will be grateful for your help.

Cheques should be made payable, please, to "St. Margaret's Restoration Fund".

This building is a house of prayer and is used every day for that purpose, to the Glory of God.

May God bless you.

**David Lowe, Vicar**  
1990

## THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE CHURCH

### St. Margaret's — A Church of Many Periods

This is one of 20 mediaeval Suffolk churches dedicated to St. Margaret of Antioch, who was martyred for her faith during the Emperor Diocletian's persecution of the Christians in the 4th century. Many legends have grown up around her and she became a very popular saint during the late Middle Ages, when she was regarded as the Patron Saint of women in childbirth. Her emblem is a cross, penetrating the open mouth of a dragon — symbolising her triumph over Satan and the forces of Evil.

St. Margaret's Church, like most mediaeval churches, contains a variety of features and treasures from several periods, as people from different times and of differing religious traditions have altered and beautified it. This church has been altered more drastically than most, particularly during its great rebuild of 1853-1854, and piecing together its long history is not easy. Its story has been influenced by the history and traditions of the English Church, by the growth of the town of Leiston, by the Abbey Church, by some of the important Leiston families and also by the clergy who have cared for the building and its people.

There was almost certainly a church upon this spot when the Domesday Survey was made in 1086 because, under Leiston, no less than three churches are mentioned. The Domesday Book is a record of what people owned, rather than a catalogue of parish buildings, so the other two churches were probably in other villages, but under the care of Leiston landowners; one may have been the ancient Chapel at Sizewell, which has long since disappeared. The existence of a church in Leiston in the 11th century, however, may well indicate that people have worshipped God on this spot for a thousand years.

In 1182, Sir Ranulf de Glanvil founded an Abbey of Premonstratensian Canons on the lonely Minsmere Marshes. The ruins are still to be found, close to the footpath to the sluice. The Abbey was rebuilt in 1363 on a firmer and more convenient site about 1½ miles to the south-west. With the other religious communities, it was suppressed in 1536. The advowson of the Parish Church was held by the Abbey and several of its parish priests were also Abbots of Leiston. The list of Vicars is complete from 1182, when the Abbey was founded. The patronage of the living of Leiston passed during the 16th century to Nicholas de Cryol and to Robert de Ufford; it was later acquired by the Company of Haberdashers, who are the present Patrons.

The extensive and interesting ruins of the Abbey stand near the road to Theberton, about a mile to the north of the town. In 1918, Miss Ellen Wrightson purchased the Abbey and adapted it for Christian use again as a private Retreat House. Upon her death in 1946, it passed to the Diocese and was run as a Diocesan Conference and Retreat Centre from 1953-1979. The residential parts are now the home of the Pro Corda Music School, although the ruins are cared for by English Heritage.

Nothing now remains of the mediaeval Chapel at Sizewell, dedicated to Saint Nicholas, but we know that it did exist. In 1476, one William Baste bequeathed money for the repair of its rood-loft and an interesting entry in the Leiston Marriage Register for 1566 records that Thomas Gower of Walberswick and Agnes Ward of Sizewell were married in the Chapel of Sizewell. The register states that "The cause was that the said Agnes was lame and could not come to the Parish Church of Leyston, so her said husband obtyned lycense to be married at the said Chappell". It must have been shortly after this that the Chapel of Ease went out of use.

About half a mile to the east of Leiston Abbey ruins is a large house called Leiston Old Abbey, owned in the early 19th century by the Tatnalls and for the remainder of that century by Lady Rendlesham and her daughter, the Hon. Miss Sophia Thellusson, who were instrumental in financing the rebuilding of the church. The Old Abbey was owned for about 10 years by the Hon. John de Grey (heir of Lord Walsingham) who bought it from Lady Rose. It was sold in 1908 to F. Egbert Hollond, whose family were responsible for beautifying the Blessed Sacrament Chapel in the church.

Leiston Hall, with its 17th century Dutch gables, stands to the south-west of the church, but the mansion owned (although rarely resided in) by the 19th century Lords of the Manor — the Vannecks (the Lords Huntingfield) — was the Cupola, situated to the south of the church. Lord Amelius Beauclerk resided there during the 19th century and his Charity gift is recorded upon a plaque in the church.

### **The Church Building before 1853**

All that remains from the mediaeval church is the tower, the font and its cover, a chest, a Communion table, an ancient stone coffin, some memorial plaques, three worn stone inscriptions, three bells and some items of plate. It is therefore rather difficult to piece together the development of the mediaeval building from what we can see here today! We can however get some idea of the church before the rebuilding from the writings of various people who visited it and from sketches of its exterior.

The church consisted of the present lofty tower, to the east of which stretched the long and continuous nave and chancel, of equal width and set beneath a continuous thatched roof. On the south side was the porch, which was also thatched. In the south wall of the church was a remarkable array of windows, whilst there were only three in the north. There were Perpendicular windows from the 15th century, "Y" traceried windows of c.1300, also two single Early English "lancet" windows, dating from the 13th century. It may well be that the core of the Norman church remained, and underwent a major restoration in the 13th century, when the font was also added. New windows later replaced the smaller and earlier windows as new fashions in architecture developed. It is also highly likely that, instead of extending the nave outwards by added side aisles, Leiston folk simply extended their church eastwards, resulting in a remarkably long and narrow building.

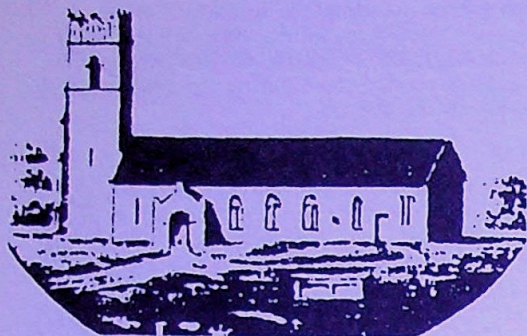
The antiquarian David Elisha Davy visited and measured the church in 1808, and from his notes we can imagine what this long, low and narrow building must have been like. Its total internal length was 128 feet (the same length as the present church), whilst the width of the nave and chancel was only 20½ feet (a little narrower than the present chancel). Internally the building was crowned by a continuous plaster ceiling which, with the absence of any chancel arch, must have given it a tunnel-like effect. The nave was 82½ feet long and the chancel 33 feet. In 1808 a gallery stood in the nave about 30 feet from the west end and in front of it stood the font. The pulpit was on the north side, about half-way up the nave (as was the custom in those days), with the box-pews placed so that the people could see the preacher, even if their backs were to the altar!

The Communion Table was raised on one step at the east end and was enclosed within three-sided Communion rails. Fixed to the east wall were boards inscribed with the Lord's Prayer, Creed and Commandments on the north side, the Royal Arms of Queen Anne above the east window, and on the south side a hatchment bearing the Smith and Montagu arms. The east wall was in fact a late 18th century rebuild in red brick and the east window had a semi-circular arch; its three light divisions with intersecting tracery were of timber. The exterior walls (apart from the tower) were covered with plaster rendering.

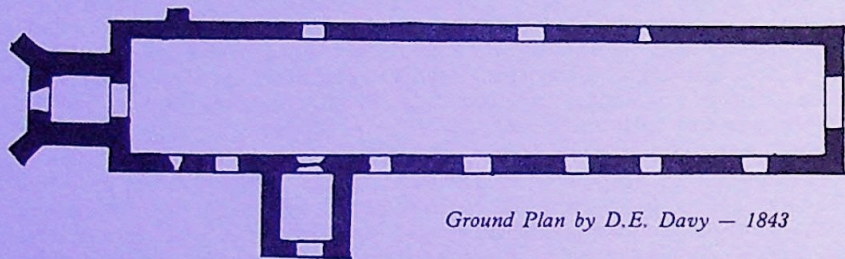
Davy returned to Leiston in 1843 and in the previous year the interior had undergone a thorough refurbishing. New pews had been put in and the old gallery had been replaced by a larger one at the west end. The old pulpit had been taken out and in its place were what Davy described as "two tubs each side of the Communion rails — one used as a pulpit and the other as a reading desk".

Amongst the memorials that he noted was a stone coffin-lid with a foliated cross in the churchyard (doubtless the lid for the coffin to be seen today). Two burial slabs in the church floor had indents for brasses of a male and female, and there were 18th century ledger slabs to members of the Sparhawke, Wall, Grimsby and Trupon families. Of the five bells in the tower, one was by John Darbie (1674) and the others were by John Brend (1640).

*St. Margaret's  
Leiston  
before  
1853*



*Sketch by Isaac Johnson — c.1818*



*Ground Plan by D.E. Davy — 1843*



*Sketch by Henry Davy — 1839*

## The Great Rebuilding 1853-4, and additions during the Rev'd J.C. Blathwayt's Ministry

Leiston's long and lean mediaeval church, even with the new pewing and the western gallery of 1842, could accommodate less than 500 worshippers and was becoming inadequate for the rapidly increasing population of the parish, which was developing from a village into a small industrial town, largely due to the thriving Engineering Works of Richard Garrett.

Garrett's began in a blacksmith's shop in Woodbridge, which moved here in 1778 and gradually expanded into a prosperous and large engineering business, making a variety of machinery, especially traction engines and agricultural implements. The population of Leiston in the 1730s was 823; by 1841 it had risen to 1177 and the census of 1871 recorded 2252 inhabitants. (It rose to 3259 in 1901 and in 1921 to 4632). The considerable increase in population by the 1850s meant that somehow the church had to be enlarged to accommodate at least 800 worshippers. The Rev'd John Calvert Blathwayt (described as being "a man of strict Evangelical principles") was attracting large congregations to hear his Gospel preaching. He came here in 1837, having served London curacies at St. Bride's Fleet Street and the Conduit Chapel in Regent Street. He remained here until his death in 1874.

Three suggestions were put forward as to the best way of enlarging the church. One was to add aisles each side of the nave, another to erect galleries at the sides, and the third was to demolish the body of the church and rebuild it. The decision was taken to rebuild, amidst considerable opposition. It was argued, however, that although the walls were old, the building had been so greatly patched up and poorly repaired that little of its medieval beauty remained. Ancient windows had been taken out and their tracery used to repair the walls. Sections of walling where windows had once been were patched up with red brick in a cheap and tasteless manner. The building was described as "merely a huge plastered tube — ugly, inconvenient and rotten" and those who advocated taking down the old church were finally vindicated when the builders dismantled the roof and found it to be "a mass of crumbling decay".

It is interesting that the new church was almost entirely paid for by voluntary contributions and that no parish rate was levied for the work, except for the restoration of the lower part of the tower and the provision of new churchyard gates. The driving force behind the fundraising was the Hon. Miss Sophia Thellusson (with the help of her mother, Lady Rendlesham), who lived at Leiston Old Abbey. Not only did Miss Thellusson (who was to marry Sir William Rose in 1856) give a generous donation herself, but she also managed to enlist the support of many of her friends and fellow parishioners, also a small grant from the Incorporated Society for Promoting the Enlargement and Building of Churches. The architect was asked to plan a church which would cost £2,500 and the price was kept down through such voluntary efforts as local farmers being used to cart building materials to the site.

St. Margaret's is a church (albeit rather an eccentric one) of the Gothic Revival — the 19th century movement which promoted the building and restoration of churches on pre Reformation lines, with correct Gothic architecture and "proper" fittings. Box-pews and three-decker pulpits were out, together with 17th and 18th century innovations, and churches were designed to look as they would have done in mediaeval times. A group of experts, known as the Cambridge Camden Society and later as the Ecclesiological Society, tried to steer the Gothic Revival according to the principles of the Oxford Movement, which restored High Church principles and sacramental worship in the Church of England. The Ecclesiologists had very set ideas about what was "correct" in architecture and fittings for new churches. They favoured stained glass, screens, dignified chancels equipped with choir-stalls, raised altars backed by reredoses, etc., and great architects like William Butterfield, G.E. Street, G. Gilbert Scott, J.L. Pearson, and others tried to put their principles into action.

Leiston, however, had an Evangelical incumbent who wanted a large preaching auditorium which would seat 840 people. Although he doubtless wanted a Gothic church which would blend with the 14th century tower, he was not interested in long chancels, bathed in "devotional dusk", but rather in a building which he could fill with seats so that he could preach to large congregations from his rapidly expanding town. It is not surprising, therefore, that the architect chosen for the new church was a person who was not one of the High Church promoters of the Ecclesiologists' directives (in fact he had little to do with them and they were usually hostile to his work) — but rather he designed what must number among the most unusual and eccentric churches provided during the 19th century. He was **Edward Buckton Lamb (1806-1869)**. One authority called architects like him, who ploughed their own furrows of eccentric originality in the buildings that they design, "rogue" architects — and Lamb must be the "arch-rogue" of them all! His churches are unmistakable and the trained eye can identify them at sight! They were nearly all built for Evangelical or Broad Church incumbents and many of them are, like Leiston's, large cruciform auditoriums, with low walls and with tall and complicated roof-structures over the large central space. His other Suffolk church is at Braiseworth and he also designed the Town Hall at Eye. Perhaps his best-known churches are St. Martin's, Gospel Oak, and St. Mary Magdalene's, Addiscombe, Surrey.

Lamb's father had been a water-colour painter and he too had enjoyed sketching old churches. Lamb began his career in the offices of L.N. Cottingham and it is probably because he was working a little earlier than most of the better known Tractarian architects that he did not share their hatred of Classical architecture, nor their adherence to the principles of the Catholic Revival (which is probably why Benjamin Disraeli commissioned him to remodel his mansion at Hughenden). His churches are blatantly original and unorthodox, yet are refreshingly picturesque and fanciful. He died, bankrupt, at the age of 63. The "Ecclesiologist" Journal (as one would expect) had little praise for Leiston Church, describing it as "a noticeable exhibition of all those eccentricities which render Mr Lamb the most affected and outre . . . of all our ecclesiastical architects". Few can fail to admit however that in St. Margaret's, Lamb gave Suffolk one of its most exciting, stimulating and amusing 19th century churches.

The original tower was the only part allowed to remain; the rest of the church was demolished. The lower part of the tower was restored and given a new west window. The belfry windows, which had lost their mullions and tracery, were not renewed, and still await restoration to their original beauty. Because the tower was reckoned to date from c.1360, Lamb used what he felt to be a style of architecture of that period, when the Decorated Style was beginning to evolve into the Perpendicular Style, although the larger windows are tall and elegant examples of the pure Decorated Style of architecture. The new church was planned in the form of a complicated cross, with a nave opening out into a large central auditorium, where four stone piers support wooden arches which create four 'chambers' at the corners. The north-east chamber (now the Blessed Sacrament Chapel) was the organ chamber and has its own small entrance, whilst its southern counterpart was to be the vestry and this has a small porch. The eastern section of this central space forms a short chancel, to the east of which a stone arch divides off the sanctuary. At the west end is the massive gallery which was intended for children only. The main entrance is by a porch to the west of the north transept.

In this way the congregation's needs were well fulfilled — a commodious building with little to obstruct the view inside. The overall length is 128 feet and the width across the transepts is 72 feet 8 inches. The side walls are comparatively low, the height being effectively achieved by the massive roof, which is a piece of ingenious carpentry, the intricate central section having been assembled in Dunn's Hole — a pit to the south-east of the church, now filled in. The external walls are faced with flint-rubble punctuated with bands of Kentish ragstone, with Caen Stone for the windows and much of the other stonework. Lamb's original roof was covered with grey tiles, punctuated by a diaper-pattern of round-ended tiles. His original floors were paved with six-inch red and buff tiles, laid diagonally. It was intended that the church would be heated with hot water by means of an apparatus housed in the cellar beneath the centre of the church, the flue of which is contained in the distinctive square south-east turret.

The work commenced in April 1853 and was finished by August 1854. Great celebrations took place on August 31st for the Grand Reopening of the church by the Right Rev'd C.J. Blomfield, Bishop of London (who grew up in Suffolk, being the son of a Bury St. Edmunds schoolmaster). For this Saturday event the town was decorated with gaily garlanded triumphal arches, adorned with appropriate mottoes. Garrett's factory (which, together with most of the shops in the town, was closed for the day) had a handsome double arch of evergreens and flowers. A dinner of roast beef and plum pudding was provided for the poor, the aged and the children, in a shed near the church, after which the children walked in procession to Leiston Old Abbey, where the Hon. Miss Thellusson provided tea and amusements for them. Unfortunately the Vicar was prevented by ill health from attending the reopening service, but the church was crowded to excess and the collection amounted to £77.2s.4d. — a very large amount for those days.

So Leiston's enlarged church became a reality, but the following years were not without their problems and teething-troubles. The first setback came with a court case held before the Vice Chancellor between June 1st-5th 1858, when William Kemp and William Hardy, who were bricklayers working on the rebuilding, filed a petition stating that they were entitled to be paid more than the contract price of £700 and claimed a further sum of £327.15s.7d. It seems that the Hon. Miss Thellusson had undertaken to make good any deficiencies in the Building Fund; Lamb had planned for an outlay of £2,500, but the amount collected came to approximately £2,000. Kemp and Hardy had studied the plans at the outset and had put in a tender for £700 for their work, which Lamb accepted on condition that any claim above this amount must be submitted to him and that his decision in the matter would be final. Once the work had started, it was found that the digging, concrete and rubble work were in excess of the quantities given by Lamb. (This had been verified by a surveyor.) Lamb had miscalculated the amount of Kentish ragstone needed, thus raising the price 150% (which was verified by three architects, two surveyors and a builder), the roof tiles were altered by the Clerk of Works to tiles which were double the cost, and £32 was owed for carting, which was to have been done gratuitously by local farmers but which in fact wasn't! The Vice Chancellor ruled in favour of the plaintiffs, stating that Lamb's decisions were harsh and severe, and that the bricklayers should be paid in full.

According to White's Directory of Suffolk, the church acquired a new organ by Willis in 1861 at a cost of over £200. It seems that this instrument needed drastic repairs in 1871 and it was finally replaced in 1879.

In 1868, the increase in the size of the population necessitated a larger churchyard, so the piece of pasture, owned by Lord Huntingfield, which filled the space between the north side of the existing churchyard and the Saxmundham road was acquired and was consecrated by the Bishop of Norwich on October 15th.

By 1871 the roof was in such an unsatisfactory state that it needed retiling on the outside and close-boarding on the inside. The church was described as being so cold and draughty during the winter that "were it not for the warm eloquence of the Rev. Incumbent, few persons would be found to endure it". It was first suggested that a ceiling should be put in, but inspection revealed that the roof itself was defective. The cost of the work was £176, of which Messrs Garrett's firm contributed £100 and Mrs Garrett of Carlton Hall gave £50. The church was closed for several months whilst a new roof (apart from the frame-work) was erected by J.W. Lacey of Norwich. Lamb's floor-pavements were taken up and replaced by coloured Newcastle tiles and a new hot-air underground heating system installed. The architect for this work was F. Peck (who had retored Stratford St. Andrew church the previous year). The church was reopened on 15th October, when the Vicar preached and the building was decorated with corn, fruit and flowers. The collection amounted to £31.7s.5¼d.

1874 saw the death of the Rev'd J.C. Blathwayt, who had guided the parish for 37 years, and it also marked the end of an era at St. Margaret's because, although his successor was his nephew, he was a man of a very different tradition, who was to steer the life and worship at St. Margaret's along new channels.

## Developments during Canon B.W. Raven's Ministry, 1874-1909

Berney Wodehouse Raven came here from curacies at St. Peter's Southwark and Holy Trinity Frome. He was the son of the Rev'd Wodehouse Raven, who was Vicar of Christ Church Streatham from 1841 until his death in 1890. Although not an extreme Ritualist, he developed at Leiston the principles of the Oxford Movement through careful teaching and sacramental worship. His Preacher's Books and Service Registers provide an interesting guide to his gentle and gradual nurturing of an Anglo Catholic tradition here.

When he arrived in 1874, the Holy Communion was celebrated only once every month and he gradually encouraged this service so that by 1880 there was a celebration each Sunday and on Saints' Days as well. At Harvest Festival in 1875, he robbed the choir in surplices borrowed from Kelsale Church and shortly afterwards equipped them with robes of their own.

In 1879 a new organ by T.C. Lewis was installed and the Vicar's father preached at the opening service on November 21st. A new brass lectern was dedicated on October 26th 1883 and at Easter 1884 various ornaments for the sanctuary were provided. Sunday October 12th 1884 saw the re-opening of the tower, after the restoration of the belfry and bells by the Garrett family, when three new bells were added and another recast as memorials to Elizabeth and Richard Garrett. The work was done by Taylor's of Loughborough and at the close of Evensong the Choir and Clergy (including the Vicar, his father and the Rev'd George Davies of Kelsale, who preached) went in procession to the ringers' gallery to dedicate the new work. The Kelsale ringers were present to assist and instruct the Leiston men in handling a ring of eight bells. The tower was also crowned by a new flagstaff and flag, given by Mr F. Garrett.

By 1887 there was a "High" celebration of the Holy Communion on all major festivals and at least once per month; there were always two celebrations of Holy Communion each Sunday, also on Thursdays and Saints Days. On October 18th 1887 the Mission Church of St. Luke at Coldfair Green was opened. Christmas Day that year was celebrated with Holy Communion at 7 and 8 a.m., High Celebration at 9.45 a.m., Matins and Low Celebration at 11 a.m., also Afternoon Service and Solemn Evensong. Solemn Evensong became the custom at Festivals; it concluded with a procession and the singing of the Te Deum. At these services brass instruments were used to enhance the grandeur of the music.

In 1888 came the visit of the Bishop of New Westminster to preach and the Vicar noted in the register that he was vested in cope and mitre. For Harvest Festival that year a processional cross was used and the "proper ornaments" were placed upon the altar. It seems that there was a complete reordering of the sanctuary, because its walls were "decorated in colours" at a cost of £100. The preacher at harvest was the Rev'd Lawford Dale of Chiswick.

Much activity took place in 1890. There was a visit by 36 members of the Church Teachers Association, in connection with the Kilburn Sisters. On February 4th a Corporate Communion was celebrated for the trial of Bishop King of Lincoln, who had been persecuted by the Church Association for his use of Eastward Position, the Mixed Chalice, candles and the Sign of the Cross. The outcome of the case was that the first three points were not declared to be illegal, and so in the November Raven records that "Lights were used for the first time in consequence of the judgement". It seems that the Vicar received little or no persecution for his innovations, although he had to put up with some unseemly behaviour — a note in the register one Sunday in 1890 states that "Before the service the Vicar addressed a severe warning and rebuke to a number of young men who had misconducted themselves during the service for several Sundays past".

On Palm Sunday 1890, 150 people were interested enough to remain for a special address on the Real Presence, which the Vicar preached after the Blessing. On Good Friday that year there were six services (including one at the Mission Church and a Three Hours Devotion) and on Easter Day there were four celebrations of the Holy Communion, also Matins, the Litany and Solemn Evensong. At Corpus Christi 1890 linen Eucharistic vestments were worn for the first time. The year ended with a successful Mission, conducted by the Rev'd C.T. Sharpe, assisted by a Church Army Captain and two Anglican Nuns."

In 1896 the Bishop's Licence was given to perform divine service in the Mission Room behind the site of Barclay's Bank.

So the worship gradually developed, the parish supported the Universities Mission to Central Africa and Raven's interest in education meant that Retreats for Church School Teachers were held here. Palm Crosses were first distributed in 1897 and that year there were 268 Easter communicants. The Terrier of Goods possessed by the church in 1894 records four altar frontals, sets of Eucharistic vestments for plain and "High" Celebrations, 26 choir cassocks and surplices and a complete set of altar candlesticks and vesper lights for plain and "High" Celebrations.

The Rev'd B.W. Raven became known and respected throughout the diocese of Norwich (in which Leiston was situated before the St. Edmundsbury and Ipswich diocese was formed in 1914) and in 1901 he was made an Honorary Canon of the Cathedral. He resigned the living in 1909 and died in 1911 at the age of 75.

## **Additions to the Church in the 20th Century**

Leiston's next Vicar was the Rev'd Robert Gordon Roe, who was here from 1909-1915. Before his arrival he was Vicar of the important churches of St. Margaret and St. Nicholas, Kings Lynn. He left Leiston to become Rector of Blakeney, Norfolk, moving to Acle in 1923, where he died four years later. Fr. Roe was a talented man, who was an artist and no mean designer of church furnishings. His obituary notice mentions gifts from his private collection of stained glass made to Norwich Cathedral and to Jesus College, Cambridge, and states that "not a few of the fine old churches with which he was associated benefitted by his loving care". Leiston was no exception to this. Perhaps his greatest work was the magnificent reredos which he designed for St. Peter's Church Kirkley, Lowestoft, in 1927.

At Leiston he maintained the Catholic tradition instituted by his predecessor and it was probably during his time that the beautiful sanctuary lamp arrived here. In 1911 the chancel received new oak choir stalls, which were dedicated on May 17th by the Archdeacon of Suffolk. They were designed by the Vicar and were made by G.A. Smyth. Shortly after this the original organ chamber became a side chapel and the road-beam was placed above the entrance to the chancel.

On May 8th 1912, a new organ was dedicated by Bishop Harrison (formerly Bishop of Glasgow and Galloway). A Garden Party, lasting two days, was held to pay for this organ. This was the third instrument in 50 years, but it has served the needs of the church ever since! It was built by James Binns of Leeds and cost £612. At the same time the oak organ screen was made by G.A. Smyth.

After the departure of Fr. Roe, Leiston's Anglo Catholic tradition gradually faded and its churchmanship under subsequent Vicars could be described as "central", with Matins being the main Sunday morning service. Canon W. Harling introduced Sung Eucharist once a month. But it was not until Canon D.B. Measures arrived in 1973 that the Eucharist once again became the central Sunday act of worship, and Eucharistic vestments were again worn. Since 1974 the Blessed Sacrament has been perpetually reserved in the side Chapel.

This chapel had been greatly beautified by members of the Hollond family, who lived at Leiston Old Abbey. In 1934 a new screen was made for the chapel, a partition was made between the chapel and the chancel, some oak panelling was added in 1945, and in 1954 a new altar table and some more panelling was installed. This work was designed by H. Munro Cautley and made by Ernest Barnes of Ipswich.

Other gifts to beautify the church which have been given during this century are described later.

Having briefly traced some of the landmarks in the long history of St. Margaret's, we now examine the building and its features in detail.

## WHAT TO SEE OUTSIDE THE CHURCH

St. Margaret's has a peaceful and sedate **setting**, pleasantly aloof from the main part of the town and near the 17th century Leiston Hall. It stands well back from the road, at the southern end of its long churchyard.

The **Churchyard** contains a few 18th century headstones and some table tombs, also three unusual iron headstones (dated 1832, 1834 and 1869) which were made by Garrett's. Two more may be seen in Westleton churchyard. Near the north transept is Leiston's War Memorial — the figure of the crucified Christ is the work of Dorothy Rope of Leiston. Near the north wall of the sanctuary is a 13th century stone coffin (its lid, which had a foliated cross, is now lost) and this may have been the burial-place of a priest.

Only the tower is mediaeval; the rest is E.B. Lamb's church of 1853-4, with its amazing array of roof-lines and windows.

The date given for the western **Tower**, which reaches a height of 73 feet, is c.1360, and work on it may have started then. It is difficult to tell, as the stately three-light west window is of 1853. The tower is strengthened by western diagonal buttresses, which have simple chequer and lozenge patterns in flint and stone flushwork. The walls are of flint rubble, incorporating a mixture of flints, pebbles and other stonework. On the south side is the simple mediaeval doorway to the belfry staircase, which ascends the tower in the south-west corner and is lit by small rectangular apertures. The chamber beneath the bells has a small cinquefoil-headed window on the south side. The belfry windows are 15th century and were two-light windows, but have lost their central mullions and most of their tracery. It is strange that these were not restored in 1853, because enough of their tracery remains to show what they would have looked like when complete. Their arches are framed with hood-moulds, which rest upon corbel heads.

A 15th century parapet crowns the tower. This has flushwork panelling and stepped battlements which have the bases of their former pinnacles. At the foot of the parapet four mediaeval faces peer out at the corners, and at the centre of each side is a gargoyle, which throws the rainwater clear of the walls.

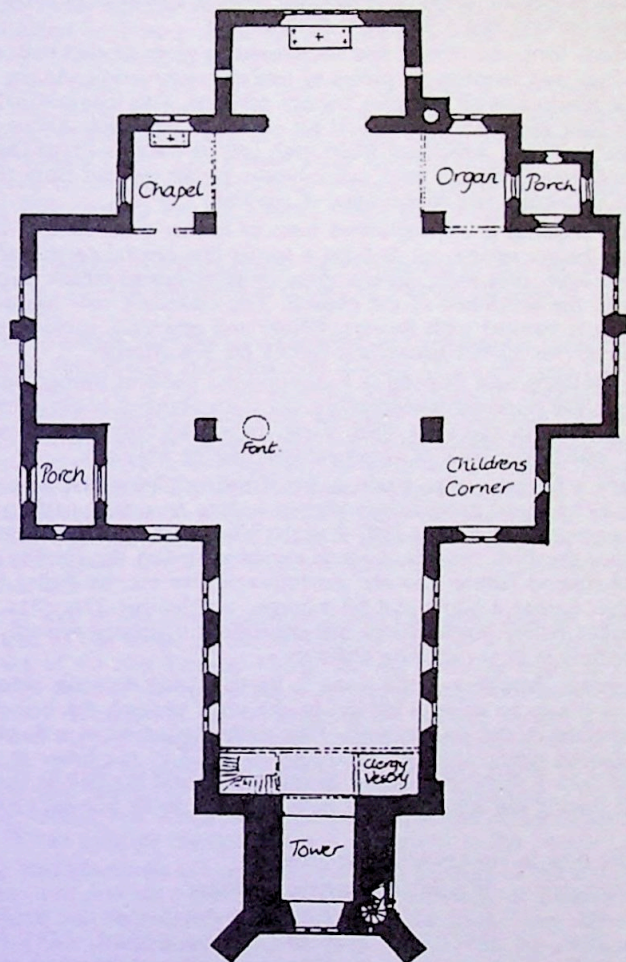
The **Body of the Church** shows Lamb's unusual adaptation of the cruciform plan, with nave, wide transepts (each having eastern and western chambers), short chancel, sanctuary, a main north porch to the west of the north transept and a small porch to the east of the south transept. On the south side of the chancel is the distinctive square turret, which is capped by a flint and stone-faced spirelet, which served as a ventilator or chimney for the heating system.

The walls are faced with three main building materials. There is flint-rubble, which Lamb used to blend in with the tower. This is punctuated by bands of rough and rugged Kentish ragstone, which also frames some of the windows and is used in the corner-quoins. Finally there is the smooth-cut and lighter-coloured Caen stone, which we see in the windows and doorways. It is unusual that there are hardly any buttresses to strengthen the walls, apart from shallow ones at the western corners of the nave and the buttresses between the pairs of windows in the transepts. At the tops of the walls are stone corbel-tables.

There is a variety of windows, some of which are very handsome. It is interesting that these are framed by hood-moulds which rest upon corbels which are square blocks of stone. Clearly it was intended that these should be carved into heads, creatures or foliage as is usual, but this was never done. The nave is lit by simple two-light windows each side, with very depressed arches. The transepts have pairs of tall and extremely elegant three-light Decorated windows, with fine tracery. The great east window in the sanctuary is a splendid five-light window, with handsome tracery and with the two central mullions forming miniature buttresses. The north and south walls of the sanctuary are each lit by a single small rectangular window. Extra light is now given to this part of the church by means of the sky-light which has been made in the roof on the south side.

There are several circular windows — the largest and finest being those in the east walls of the eastern transept chambers, which are both filled with intricate and beautiful traceried patterns.

The north porch has a large entrance arch which frames the vast single door by which we enter the church; the final eccentricity must be its enormous door-handle, which is 8½ inches in diameter and is fit to grace a cathedral!



*Rough Plan, showing the structure of the Church*

## WHAT TO SEE INSIDE THE CHURCH

We enter at the western end of the vast central portion of this remarkable and highly original interior. To the west is the unaisled nave and to the east is the central auditorium of the crossing and the transepts north and south, the chancel to the east and, beyond it, the sanctuary. The walls at the sides are quite low and the roofs remarkably tall. Four rectangular **Stone Piers** support the crossing and its roof timbers, also the **Wooden Arches**, with their traceried fretwork spandrels, which divide off the four transept chambers. The only **Stone Arches** are the tower arch and the elegant arch far away in the east, separating the sanctuary from the chancel. This arch has octagonal responds beginning about half-way up. This is a church of wide open spaces, also small intimate corners and a wealth of grand vistas.

The **Roofs**, which form the climax and the crowning glory of this very distinctive interior, are intricate and flamboyant pieces of timber construction. At the tops of the walls are wooden cornices, with fretwork tracery patterns, also longitudinal arch-braces between the very long hammerbeams which jut out from the sides. Above the hammerbeams are spandrels which are filled with carved tracery. From the hammerbeams, arch-braces rise to meet collar-beams higher up and from the collar-beams horizontal king-posts rise to the apex of the roof.

Over the central crossing is a complicated mass of timber construction. From the four corner piers, great beams spring out to form a spider-like central corona of beams beneath where the four roofs meet. It was these crossing beams which were assembled at Dunn's Hole, to the south-east of the church. The sanctuary roof has no hammerbeams, but is painted with flowers, foliage and emblems, including the IHS and XPC monograms of Our Lord's name, and the M for His Mother.

The **Western Gallery and Screen** is a complicated piece of timberwork, with a mass of larger-than-life traceried woodcarving. Its main skeleton is the great timber arch which spans its framework and rests upon stone corbels set near the ground. It supports a sloping gallery which was built to accommodate Leiston children.

From the gallery a further screen leads to the **Ringling Chamber**, where the church's eight bells are rung. Around its walls are various boards recording peals rung on the bells, including a stone plaque with 1887-9 peals. There has been a strong ringing tradition here since the 19th century. Leiston was regarded as the ringing capital of East Anglia. One ringing family who are remembered here are the Bailey brothers. A peal of Bob Major, lasting 2 hours and 58 minutes, on October 21st 1911, was rung entirely by the eight Bailey brothers and this constitutes a ringing record! A photograph of the Bailey brothers is in the ringing chamber.

Access to the upper chambers of the tower is by the spiral staircase entered from outside, as well as inside by an iron ladder. In the stage beneath the bell-chamber is a blocked single window in the eastern wall. This probably served as a **Santus Bell Window** in mediaeval times, enabling the ringer of a bell in the tower to get a clear view of what was taking place at the altar in order to sound the bell at the Sanctus and the Consecration during the Mass, so that people unable to be present could join in prayer.

The eight **Bells** now in the tower are as follows:—

	Diameter	Weight: cwt qtr lbs	Maker	Date
Treble	28"	5 2 11	Taylor & Co	1884
2nd	28"	5 2 19	Taylor & Co	1884
3rd	33"	6 3 26	John Brend (Norwich)	1640
4th	32"	6 2 6	John Brend	1640
5th	35"	9 0 9	Taylor & Co	1884
6th	37"	10 0 6	John Darbie (Ipswich)	1674
7th	40"	11 0 23	Taylor & Co	1854
Tenor	47"	20 2 2	Taylor & Co	1884

The treble and 2nd bells were given by Frank Garrett in memory of his brother and partner, Richard. The 5th was recast and the tenor was given in memory of Elizabeth Garrett by her children. In 1954 the treble bell was also rededicated in memory of Arthur Garrett, the tenor bell rededicated also in memory of the Cutts family, and the remaining 6 bells in memory of Sir Frank and Lady Garrett.

The base of the tower forms a vestry and in its south wall have been set three pieces of stone with 15th century **Latin Inscriptions**, asking prayers for the souls of departed people. One, commemorating Edward and Margerie Moore, was set into one of the nave window-splays when Davy visited the old church in 1808.

The nave, transepts and crossing were literally crammed with **Benches** until May 1987, when the front ones were removed to give space for the **Central Altar**, which fits so well into a cruciform church. The altar itself is a 17th century Communion Table, which was probably in use in the old church. This nave altar is covered with a beautiful laudian cover suitable for all liturgical seasons. New altar rails and embroidered kneelers have been made for the nave altar, and new candlesticks given — all by members of the present congregation.

The 13th century **Font** is one of the finest of its period in the county. It stands upon a circular base and at the corners of its hexagonal stem are circular shafts with moulded capitals and bases, which rise to support the simple trefoil arcading which surrounds the circular tub-shaped bowl. The **Font-Cover** survives from the 17th century and its urn-shaped central termination is capped by a more recent cross. To the south of the font stands the 16th century **Parish Chest**, where parish documents and valuables were stored.

The north-west transept chamber forms the entrance area into the church, with displays, books, etc. On the wall here is a **List of Parish Priests** of St. Margaret's from the year 1182.

The south-west transept chamber is a carpeted and attractively furnished Children's Corner. The small **Bas-Relief Reredos** here depicts Our Lady and Infant Jesus, with two visiting children. This is the work of Ellen Mary Rope of Blaxhall, whose sculpture may be seen in several churches, including Salisbury Cathedral and Maritzburg Cathedral, South Africa. She designed many memorial tablets and specialised in plaster models and bas-reliefs where bronze and marble were too expensive. Nearby is an **Early 17th Century Chest**, also a **Watercolour Picture**, painted by Winifred Byatt in 1928, showing the sanctuary, with stencilled walls and the painted reredos above the High Altar, which was removed in 1971 and is now at a museum in Norfolk. The stained glass in the **Small Circular Window** shows a pair of dividers (possibly Masonic) and the date 1854.

Beside the west wall of the south transept is the **Triptych of Our Lady of Leiston**, which was painted in the 1930s by the Marquis D'Oisy for a Roman Catholic lady who lived near the site of the first Leiston Abbey, not far from the beach in the north-east corner of Sizewell. Each of the wings has a praying Premonstratensian Canon and three angels with musical instruments. In the centre is the Blessed Virgin, throned, with the original Abbey and the sea beyond, but also with modern sailing and steam ships.

On the east side of this transept is a copy of the alabaster statue of **Our Lady of Lorraine**, which now resides in the Victoria and Albert Museum. This statue, which shows Our Lady feeding her infant Son, was loaned for use in the Chapel of Leiston Abbey Retreat House until its closure, when it was given to the Parish Church.

Two **Charity Benefactions** are recorded on stone plaques in the south transept. That on the west wall records a gift by Mr Thomas Grimsby of Leiston of £200, the interest from which was to be used to buy bread for the poor "who came to hear Divine Service". (This distribution began on June 29th 1775). He also gave revenue from his lands and tenements at Westleton for the clothing of poor children and widows. In the old church were memorials to Thomas, who died in 1728, his wife Sarah (died 1755) and other members of their family.

On the east wall, over the doorway, is recorded the Infant Beauclerk Charity, given in 1869 by Lord Amelius Beauclerk, who lived at the Cupola — a large house to the south of the church. He invested £100 for coals, clothing and bread for the poor of Leiston and Sizewell.

The north-east transept chamber has been tastefully furnished to provide an intimate and comfortable Chapel for small services and private prayer. The Blessed Sacrament has been reserved here since 1974. It is entered beneath a pleasant oak **Screen**, with delicate traceried woodwork in keeping with the beautiful 15th century screens which grace our churches. This was erected in 1934 and replaced what was described as "an inferior painted screen". The Chapel has been furnished by stages from 1934 onwards in memory of the Hollond family, who purchased Leiston Old Abbey in 1908. The screen commemorates Ursula, wife of Francis Egbert Hollond, and their daughter Nancy, who both died in 1933. The **Oak Partition** between the Chapel and the chancel, also the adjacent choir seat and some panelling were made in 1945, in memory of George Egbert Hollond, who died in 1944. The beautifully carved **Altar Table**, with its linenfold panelling and open tracery at the sides, was erected in 1954 in memory of Francis Egbert Hollond (died 1953) together with the panelling which lines the wall behind it. This was designed by H. Munro Cautley and was made by Ernest Barnes of Ipswich, and it is probable that they were responsible for the other work in this Chapel.

The two-light east window has **Stained Glass** showing St. Edward the Confessor and St. Elizabeth and the circular window above has the Instruments of the Passion and the emblems of the Holy Trinity and the Blessed Sacrament. This glass was made in 1910 and is a memorial to Mary Alexander.

The main feature of the north transept is the striking 20th century glass in the **Sylvester and Rope Memorial Windows**. Both windows show the skill and versatility of Margaret Edith Aldrich Rope, whose beautiful glass adorns several churches, including Barnby, near Beccles, Bromley Parish Church, St. Benedict's Ardwick, Manchester and St. Augustine's Haggerston, London.

The western window is in memory of Dr Herbert Sylvester, who died in 1927. It was dedicated in February 1959 and, appropriately, the subject is St. Luke, with some of the events recorded in his Gospel, particularly the events surrounding the birth and boyhood of Jesus. The Ox — the emblem of St. Luke — may be seen at the top of the central light.

The eastern window commemorates the designer's parents, Arthur and Agnes Rope, who died in 1946 and 1943 respectively. Arthur was Churchwarden here for over 40 years. It is based upon St. Matthew and some events in his Gospel. There are also Old Testament scenes of David and Ruth, which are very fitting because Arthur was a farmer, who lived at Leiston Lower Abbey Farm. The lower scenes show a Suffolk ploughman, with a windmill and a ruined church in the background, also the loading of the farm cart at Harvest, with Lower Abbey Farm in the background. The ruined church is the old chapel remains of the original Leiston Abbey, near Minsmere. Both windows are signed with a tortoise and the initials M.E.A.R.

A wide **Rood Beam** straddles the church at the division of the chancel from the central crossing. It is studded with flowers, has tracery beneath and is surmounted by a plain cross. This beam arrived during Fr. Roe's time here and may be the gift made in 1915 which is referred to as a "Rood Screen" on the plaque near the pulpit. It is interesting that most of the **Corbels** in the church are uncarved — the only carved ones being those above the piers flanking the chancel entrance, which take the form of shields, painted with Christian symbols.

The **Pulpit** is of Caen stone and is pierced by bold traceried openings. It was designed by E.B. Lamb and was made by Thomas Thurlow of Saxmundham. The brass eagle **Lectern** (the eagle emphasising that the Word of God must not only be read, but spread) dates from 1883.

The **Choirstalls**, with their traceried fronts and carved poppyhead ends, are clearly of superior quality to the other benches in the church and of a later date. They were designed by the Rev'd R.G. Roe and were made in 1911 by G.A. Smyth.

The elegant **Sanctuary Arch** retains some of the stencilled colouring which once covered the walls at the east end of the church. There are vines painted on the responds of the arch and various designs cover the surrounding wall above the arch.

Leiston's **Sanctuary** is distinctive and quite out of the ordinary, with its tiny rectangular north and south windows, its magnificent east window, and the roof-window, which effectively fills it with light and bathes it in a subdued yellow. Suspended from the roof is a very beautiful silver **Sanctuary Lamp**, symbolising the presence of God in this, the most sacred part of the church. The lamp may well be of 17th century date and of Continental workmanship. It is probable that the Rev'd R.G. Roe acquired it during his time here.

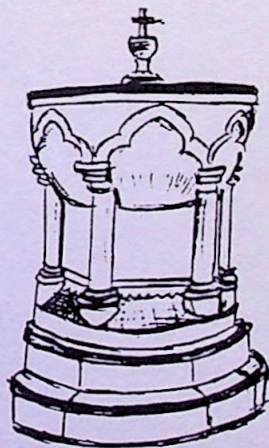
The east end of the church has colour, atmosphere and great dignity. It is furnished in keeping with the Catholic tradition. The **High Altar**, raised upon its steps, rightly forms the focal-point of the sanctuary. The white frontal, with the words, "Herein is Love", is a memorial of Irene Harling to her husband, Canon Harling. The cross and six candlesticks which stand upon the carved gradine above the altar were installed by Canon Raven. We can see by the outline in the central part of the east window where the painted reedos once fitted. (See the painting in the Children's Corner which shows it in place.)

The **East Window** is handsomely proportioned, with elegant tracery and (unusually) its splays are faced with knapped flint. It is filled with superb stained glass by Charles Eamer Kempe, who was one of the finest stained glassmakers at the turn of the century. It is a memorial to Anne Garrett, who died in 1897, and is full of female martyr saints — all carrying their martyrs' palms and many also with their emblems. These constitute a mini-textbook of Saints and Symbols! The interesting feature here is that all the female faces are based upon portraits of Mrs Garrett at different stages of her life. Working from left to right, and beginning at the top, we see:—

1. SS. Apollonia (pincers), Perpetua (book), Dorothy (basket of flowers),
2. SS. Margaret (sword with cross-shaped handle), Cecilia (organ), Euphemia (sword),
3. Christ in Majesty and angel with inscriptions,
4. SS. Katherine (wheel), Lucy (dish), Agnes (lamb),
5. SS. Agatha (large tongs or pincers), Prisca (lion), Felicitas (sword and Crown of Life).

In the tracery are shields and martyrs' palms, also two wheat-sheafs — the trademark of C.E. Kempe, by which his windows can be recognised.

The **Organ** stands in the south-east transept chamber, which was originally the vestry. It is a two manual and pedal instrument, built in 1912 by James Binns of Leeds. The Swell Organ has nine speaking stops and a Tremulant, the Great has nine, the Pedal has four and there are seven couplers.



*The 13th century Font*

## MEMORIAL PLAQUES

There are many memorials to people of the past who have been associated with this church and parish. Some of these have taken the form of furnishings and ornaments, or stained glass windows, most of which have already been described. There are also several memorial plaques on the walls of the church, which are as follows.

In the north transept are commemorated several members of the Garrett family, whose Engineering Works transformed the face of Leiston and gave employment to thousands of people. The Garretts lived at Carlton Hall, near Saxmundham, and some are buried at the church there, but are also commemorated in this church.

1. **Richard Garrett** (died 1866) has a bust beneath a trefoil-headed canopy on the west wall, carved by Thomas Thurlow of Saxmundham. He was the grandson of the founder of the Leiston Works and served for a time as Deputy Lieutenant of Suffolk.
2. **Elizabeth Garrett**, his widow, who died in 1884, has a brass plaque by Messrs Vaughan and Brown of London on the south wall. This also gives details of the recasting of the 3rd and the gift of the tenor bell in her memory, and the addition of two bells in memory of her son Richard who also died in 1884.
3. **Alfred Stead Garrett** (Churchwarden 1906-15), also his son and daughter-in-law. A brass plaque on the south wall.
4. **Winifred Garrett** (wife of the above), who died in 1913. Brass plaque on the south wall.
5. Lieut **Alfred Boteler Garrett**, of the Indian Army, who was killed in 1921, at the age of 20. Plaque on the stone pier.
6. Captain **Stephen Garrett**, who was killed in 1915. Metal plaque on the east wall.

On the east wall of the north transept are two further plaques.

1. **William Tatnall** (died 1826) and **Mary** (died 1837), who lived at Leiston Old Abbey. A marble plaque, taken from the old church.
2. **Arthur George Michael Rope** who died, aged 16, in 1905 at his school (the King's School Canterbury). The memorial shows the boy at prayer, worked in silver by Miss Dorothy Rope, who also sculpted the figure on the War Memorial outside.

Beside the organ is a small but beautiful plaque to Canon **Berney Wodehouse Raven** (Vicar 1874-1909), who died in 1911. It is worked in coloured marble and shows him in Eucharistic Vestments, carrying the chalice. Nearby is a framed inscription with a fine tribute to his wife, **Mary Raven**, who died in 1936 in her 99th year, recording her work for the Girls' Friendly Society and the gift of a silver almsdish in her memory.

Flanking the sanctuary arch are two stone plaques.

1. The Rev'd **John Calvert Blathwayt** (died 1874). A Gothic memorial by Thomas Thurlow of Saxmundham.
2. **Elizabeth Smith** (died 1762), wife of William Smith and daughter of Edward, Viscount Hinchinbroke.

Most of the **Church Plate** is 19th and 20th century. The oldest items are a silver chalice, paten and flagon, given in 1766 by Thomas Trigg (Vicar), also a paten given in 1772 by the Rev'd Thomas Bull.

The **Registers** of this church (now in safe-keeping at the County Record Office), date back to the year 1538, which was the year when the keeping of such documents was first ordered.

*Picture of the rebuilt church which  
appeared in "The Builder" 1854*

