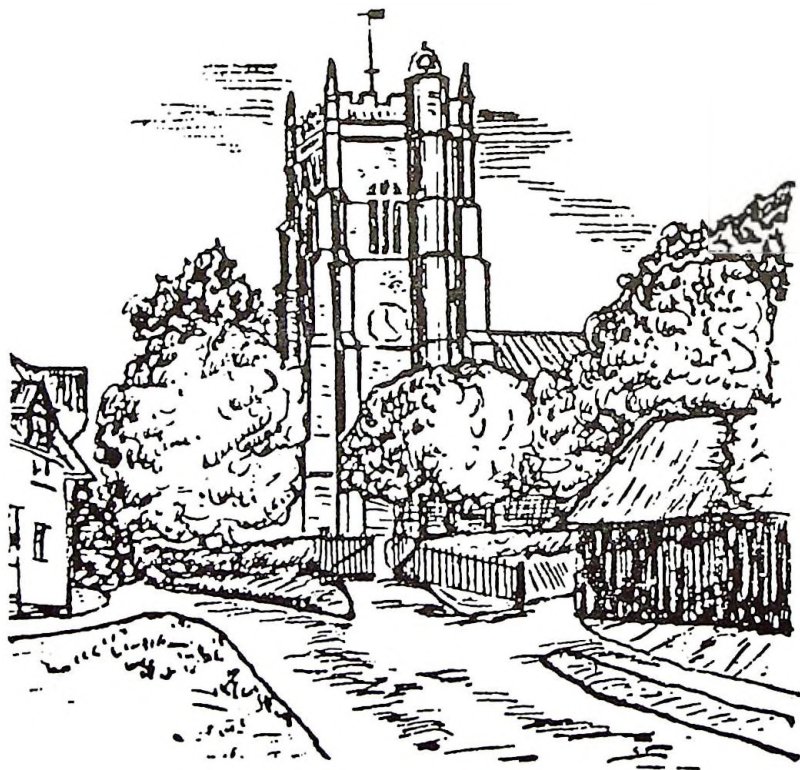


St PETER'S CHURCH

Monks Eleigh



**WE ARE GRATEFUL FOR YOUR HELP WITH THE UPKEEP OF
THIS MEDIEVAL CHURCH**

**PLEASE PLACE YOUR CONTRIBUTION IN THE SAFE BEHIND
THE MAIN DOOR.**

PARISH NAME - The intriguing name of this parish - Monks Leigh - derives from early times when the local lands, now covered by the parishes of Monks Leigh and its neighbour to the west, Brent Leigh, were owned by a prominent Saxon named Illa. The estate was known as "Illanlege" deriving from "Illan", meaning "of Illa" and "lege" or "leigh", meaning meadow, the style being modified to "Illegh" at the time of Domesday.

In the 10th century, part of the estate was owned by Aelfgar, Ealdorman of Essex, who bequeathed his lands to his daughter Elfreda and her husband Brithnoth, with the proviso that on their deaths the property should pass to Christ Church, Canterbury. Aelfgar died in 953 and Brithnoth, who succeeded him as Ealdorman of Essex, died in 991 fighting the Danes at Maldon on the Essex coast. In terms of the widow's will the property passed to Christ Church and came under the administration of the monks at Canterbury: hence the separate parish name of Monks Leigh, first mentioned in 1238.

GENERAL - The finely proportioned church of St Peter, Monks Leigh, stands in a commanding position above the village green. There are stones, seemingly of Saxon origin, in the church walls implying the existence of a church here before the Conquest. The first reference to a structure is an order dated 1229 for timber for repairs to the chapel of Illegh which indicates a church already old enough to need repairs.

It is considered that the general plan of the present church, the piers of the south arcade and the south doorway may be assigned to the 14th century, whilst the tower, porch, north aisle, roofs of both aisles and the clerestory windows are 15th century. The date 1630 can be seen on the beam in the south aisle, immediately west of the south door.

TOWER - The large west tower has flush flint and stone panelling. The stair turret is on the south side, not at the angle and is surmounted by the clock bell. One unusual feature is that the angle buttresses of the tower finish 12 feet down from the parapet where the weatherings are linked by a large carved mask, from which is carried up a small octagonal buttress with panelled and traceried sides, terminating as a crocketed pinnacle above the parapet.

In 1631 a spire was added to the tower, but its weight proved excessive and after extensive strengthening works to the tower had been carried out, it was dismantled in 1845: at the same time the belfry windows were restored and the present tracery of the tower west window installed. The tower arch is of dignified proportions with bases of columns curiously recessed.

The tower was extensively underpinned and repaired in 1992-3, with funds raised locally, supported by grants from English Heritage, The Suffolk Historic Churches Trust and the Historic Churches Preservation Trust.

DOORS - The west doorway, square perpendicular, has niches and carvings of flowers, quaint crawling figures and a hood-mould on two big heads. The south doors have carved panels: the north doorway possibly existed in the original north wall, being moved bodily into its present position when the aisle was built.

NAVE - The roof is 14th century and of single framed and braced rafter type variously known as "waggon tilt" or "seven-sided rafter". It retains about 3ft of its canopy of honour to the rood at the east end.

The pier arcade to the south aisle is also 14th century with octagonal pillars, the sides, caps and bases all being concave, whereas the slightly older north arcade has normal plane surface pillars: , on the south side the arches are double-chamfered, whereas those on the north side have one chamfer and one sunk quadrant moulding, apart, strangely enough, from the easternmost, which is completely plain.

The traceries of all the windows of the church, except the clerestories, are 19th century.

The approach to the rood loft stairs is by a door 7 feet to the sill in the south aisle. At the north end of the rood loft the main wall is pierced (here there is a small squint commanding the high altar) and at a slightly lower level there must have been a loft over the parclose screen which enclosed the end of the north aisle and formed a chapel, presumably used by the parochial Guild. A niche remains in the north-east angle and there is a pillar piscina in the east column of the nave arcade.







THE CHANCEL - The Queen Anne ROYAL COAT OF ARMS was restored and positioned above the chancel arch in 1983. The chancel itself was rebuilt in 1855.

FONT - This is 13th century and of unusual design with a moulded central shaft and four small coner pillars, the square bowl having a single floriate cross on the east face and a similar one designed for the west face, but never completed. The material is Barnack stone from Northamptonshire, the same as is used elsewhere in the church. The cover dates from the 15th century. The boss and some finials and boards were renewed in 1901: otherwise the cover retains much of the original.

PULPIT - This is a simple hexagonal, medieval pulpit with traceried panels supported on post and groined coving - one of the few pre-Reformation pulpits in Suffolk.

ALMS BOX - This is of the plain square pillar type dated 1636 and was in use until 1994.

BELLS - The belfry contains a ring of six well-matched bells of excellent and powerful tone, the tenor bell scaling 18 cwts. The bells have the following inscriptions:

- (1) T. Osborn facit 1790
- (2) & (6) Miles Graye made me 1638
- (3) Miles Graye made me 1637
- (4)  65 thrice x ora  68 Laurenti  68 Bona
 Campana  Paci
- (5)†  Assumpta Est Maria in Celum (The Blessed Virgin Mary has been received into Heaven.

† This bell is dated between 1330 and 1356, maker either Peter de Weston or William Revel.

CLOCK - The old clock was replaced in 1841 by a new one made by Mr Ambrose of Sudbury