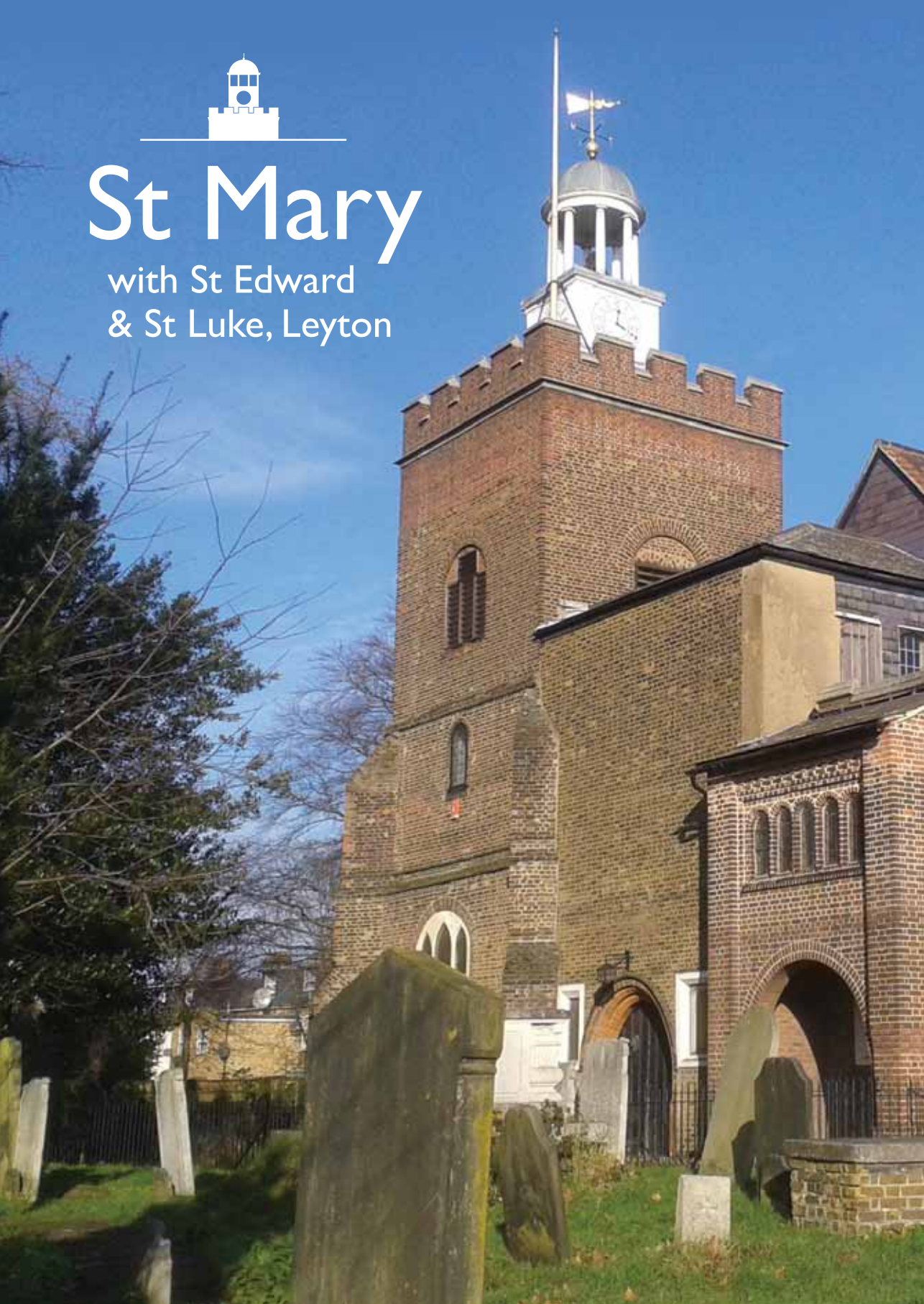




# St Mary

with St Edward  
& St Luke, Leyton





# Welcome...

The current church of St Mary's Leyton stands on a plot of ground which has been dedicated to Christian worship for around a thousand years. The site is mentioned in the Domesday Book of William the Conqueror and Anglo-Saxon foundations have been found. We, the living church, at St Mary's feel privileged to worship God in a place where countless others have stood to worship God down the centuries.

We are very proud of the heritage of this church - a grade II\* listed building - and want to share this with the local community. Every year we have many enquiries from people all over the world wanting to trace the graves of their ancestors and historians come to see the Hickes Memorial chapel. In the last few years we have had requests from film makers to use the inside and outside of the church and graveyard in their productions.

We have also a large number of photographs, paintings and documents about the church and Leyton that have been lovingly curated and cared for by Mrs Pat Gough, a long standing member of the congregation.

This church is a hidden gem in Leyton, rich in history, active still in service to the community and deserves to be known better. Through this booklet we hope you will discover more about the rich heritage and history of St Mary's.

...mentioned in the  
Domesday Book...



# Our Heritage

## The 1600 - 1700's

St Mary's is one of the oldest places of worship in Leyton. Indeed, it was the only place of Anglican worship in Leyton until 1749, when a chapel was opened in Leytonstone which later became St John the Baptist. The Domesday Book lists two priests as present on manors in Leyton in 1086, during the reign of William the Conqueror. However there was no mention made of an actual church building.

The earliest reference we have to a church here is in a charter from 1182 when Henry II gave nearby Stratford Langthorne Abbey the rights of the land in areas such as Leyton and West Ham. There are no records of any changes at St Mary's during the Abbey's ownership, which lasted until its dissolution in 1538. It is only in 1610 that we have the first details of the physical building which describe the erection of an upper chancel or chapel on the north side of the existing chancel. Prior to this the church would have consisted of only Nave, Chancel, and West Tower – all of which have disappeared under later extensions.

Since then, the building has been repaired and restored many times – sometimes extensively, and sometimes with only minor changes being made. Here is a list of the changes and alterations in best chronological order and description formulated from records we still have today:

1656 saw the first major work when it was decided that the body of the church "being very old and ruinous" needed to be rebuilt, and they also decided to expand with a North Aisle. The dilapidated medieval tower was replaced by a new brick tower built on the northwest corner of the Nave, and a new North Aisle filled the gap between this tower and the 1610 chapel.

John Strype was the leader in the 1693 enlargement of the chancel, which is further explained in the Hickes section - see page 13.

The vestry minutes from this time period record that the chancel "was so straight and so void of room that there was no room for the inhabitants," mostly because of the Hickes monument. The new work lengthened the chancel by 15ft, and came with a circular east window, and oval windows on the north and south sides.

A west gallery originally built in 1711 was enlarged in 1727 and again in 1811 when it was thought "that there are many families who absent themselves from church for want of pews." At least we know the church was continually growing at this time.

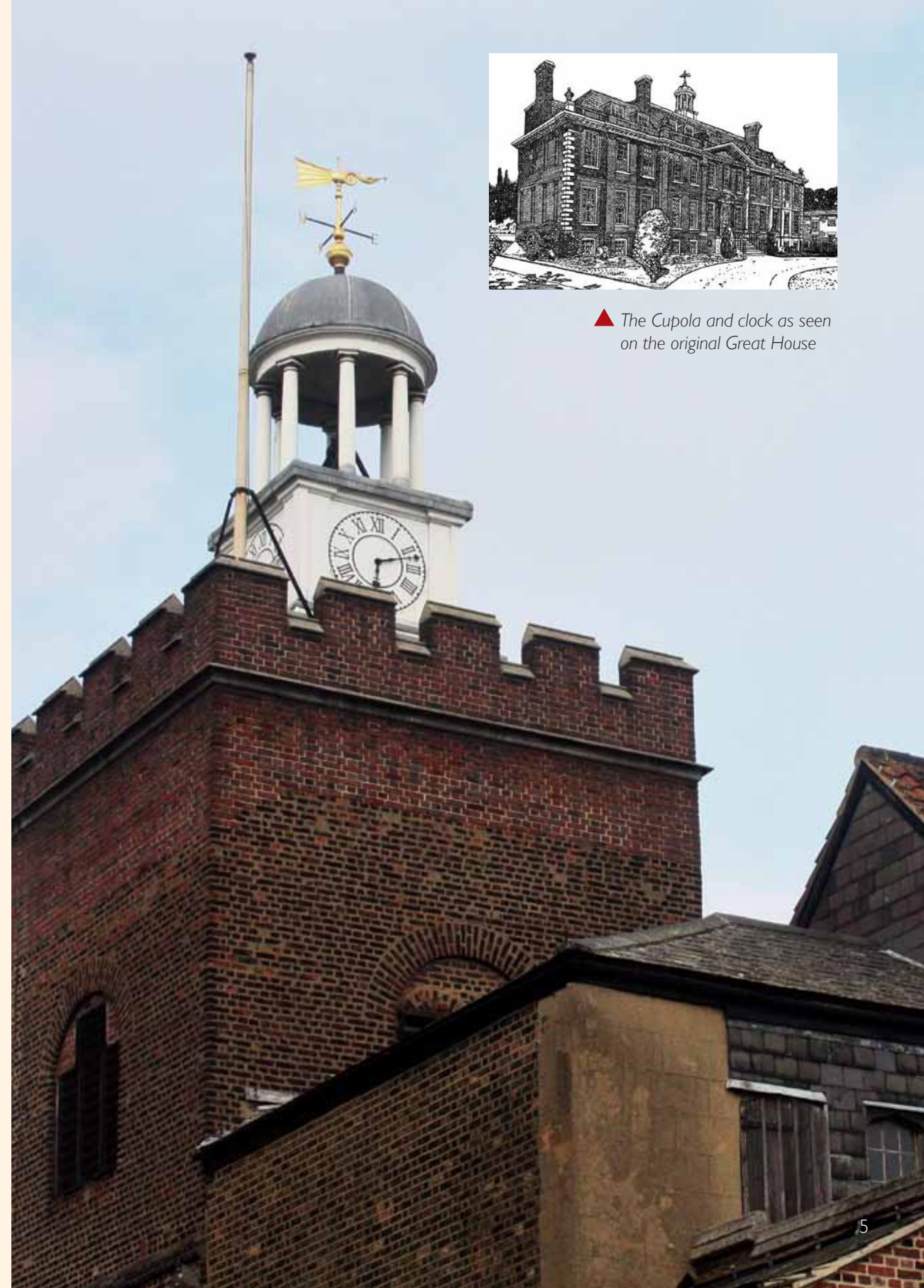
## The Great House

The clock and cupola are probably the most noticeable features of the building when walking around outside. Interestingly, the cupola is not the original; the current one was added in 1806. The cupola consists of eight wooden pillars with a black dome and an attractive gilt weather vane on top. The clock is placed in the middle of the pillars.

The current clock was built in 1768 by William Addis, and – along with the cupola – was made for the Great House in Leyton High Road. When the Great House (built in the early 1700s by Sir Fisher Tench and described by John Strype as being of 'modern' appearance) was acquired a century later by local parishioner John Theophilus Daubuz, he donated the clock and cupola to the church. There is some contention over whether this was done out of genuine Christian charity or simply because he hated the clock, due to its chiming too loudly for comfortable domestic living! The clock was automated in 1981, and the cupola was restored and repaired in the 1920s when the wood was discovered to be rotten.



▲ The Cupola and clock as seen on the original Great House



▶  
Cupola and clock  
c. 1806.



## The 1800's

In 1817, Thomas Lane, the then churchwarden, paid for another gallery to be added over the communion table for the purpose of accommodating Sunday school boys; the gallery could accommodate 100 boys. The Sunday school girls were intended to be accommodated by an enlargement to the West Gallery of 1711. Again, Mr Daubuz was disgruntled at this change and refused to give up "what he considers his right to the whole of the space of a corner in the gallery." It was decided by the Vestry not to enter into litigation about the space.

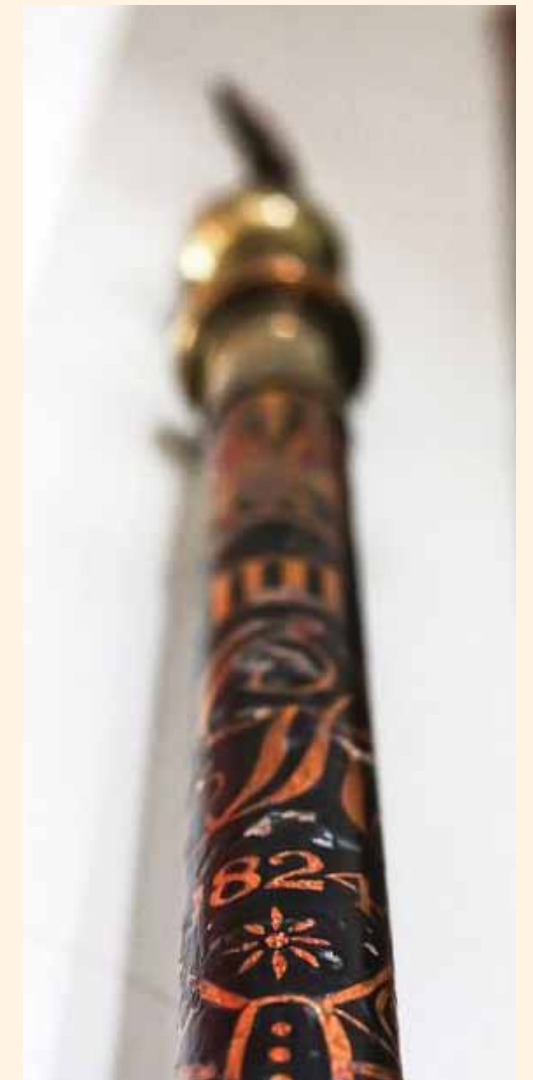
In 1822 came extensive alterations designed by the architect John Shaw and built by Thomas Cubitt. The South Aisle and the Vestry were added on the south side of the church after the realization that the "small tradesman, labourers and servants who [then] sit or stand in the Aisles, to a great inconvenience of themselves and others."

One parishioner started the fund by donating £1000 anonymously, and then the other three quarters of the sum required for the building being given as voluntary contributions. The new South Aisle was built of brown stock brick in a plain Gothic style, and included a west gallery. These alterations also saw the Nave extended 12 feet eastwards into the Chancel space to form an extra bay in the body of the church, so that only the 1693 extension remained as sanctuary space, and they also took away the oval side windows that had been added in 1693.

### *Beadle's staff*

*This staff dates from 1824, and is complete with the Royal Monogram of George IV. The staff is one half of the barge pole used by Queen Victoria on her trip down the River Lea in the Royal Barge, which she gave to St Mary's as a souvenir of her visit to Leyton; the other half was gifted to St Mary's Walthamstow, and has since been donated to a museum.*

In the North Aisle this extension effectively absorbed the 1610 chapel into the body of the aisle. As part of the alteration of Nave and Chancel a new purely decorative Chancel Arch was made from lath and plaster. A new timber clerestory was added above the Nave and the whole church re-roofed. The new pillars of the Nave arcades supporting this clerestory were of cast iron - the wonder material of the Industrial Revolution.





▲ **Organ**  
Remodelled in 1885

The organ, given to the church in 1822, has a somewhat controversial provenance. In the early 20th Century, Rev Robert Bren, the vicar of St Mary's at the time, wrote a poem in the parish magazine which claimed that the organ came from Brighton zoo and was bought second hand. While this is a generally accepted view, there are some who have argued against this point. Some argue that the church was in possession of the organ before the zoo was built, and when the organ was rebuilt in 1968, parts were found and are believed to be as old as 1760. As it stands today, the organ's true Brighton connections - if, indeed, there are any - remain a mystery.

In 1853 the old box pews were removed, a large three-light window inserted in the place of the oval one, and the Hickes family monuments moved to the small chapel under the Tower where they can be found today.

In 1884 a west doorway was inserted under the West Gallery and a baptistery arranged in the south-west corner. This south-west corner has since been remodelled as a Porch, with the font moved to halfway along the South Aisle



**Font** ▲  
*The font dates from the 15th Century; the pedestal, however, is much newer, having been given to the church in 1827 by William Cotton, the then churchwarden.*



## The 1900's

In 1928 and 1932 all the Victorian stained glass, with the exception of the East window and the East window of the North Aisle, were replaced by modern glass.

In 1932 the chancel was lengthened again by 16 feet to provide much-needed room for the sanctuary, and the oval windows once again made an appearance, copying those removed in 1822. This was part of a substantial overhaul that saw the Chancel Arch and clerestory both rebuilt in concrete. Even the cast-iron arcade pillars were encased in concrete – the new wonder-material of the Modern movement.

During World War II, bombs fell in the churchyard of St Mary's, but it was believed that the building itself had remained unharmed. However, damage was found to the parapet walls of the tower after the war, and in 1951 repairs had to be made to the tower parapet and the interior decoration of the tower. Oak communion rails, designed by the York-based architect J. Stuart Syme, were erected in 1955 in memory of Canon R. B. Bertin, vicar 1940–52.

**Sundial** ►  
*Over the doorway to the South-East porch, outside, there is a sundial to mark the three quarters completion of an extensive restoration which took place in 1938.*

## ▲ **War Memorial**

*The oak chancel screen and altar-piece (from The Last Supper by Leonardo Di Vinci) were added and dedicated in 1920 as a war memorial. However, they were separated in 1963, with the screen being moved under the west gallery, where it can be found today. The altar piece remains where it has stood since it was first dedicated.*





▲  
*Old chancel screen*

Restoration work begun in 1962 included laying a new floor in the nave. While work was in progress several burial vaults with later infilling were discovered below the floor. They included a very large one under the west end of the nave which had been constructed in 1711 for Sir Gilbert Heathcote of Forest House. The chancel screen was removed to the west end underneath the gallery, and a new parquet floor was laid in 1962.

These restorations prompted the Diocesan Conference, when it visited the church in 1898, to say that the church “can scarcely be called a handsome building”. Historians since, however, have praised the beauty of the building, and found great appreciation for the changes that have been made and the layered history that the building provides.

As it stands today, the oldest parts of the building are the tower and the north aisle, which were built in brick as part of a restoration in 1656-9. However, one of the bells was cast c.1400.

▲  
*Monument to John Strange, d.1754.  
This work is attributed to Sir Henry Cheere*

In 1995, an arson attack on the church destroyed the organ pipes and caused other damage to the building. Newspapers at the time described the church as ‘gutted’ after the attack, which caused £100,000 worth of damage, though it is believed that some £600,000 was spent on the church in repairing the damages and making changes to the church. Kay Pilsbury Thomas Architects was responsible for the works following the attack, which included creating a chapel under the tower, remodelling the entrance of the church, and forming a crèche at the west end of the church.

The attack was, however, somewhat sensationalised by the media at the time; newspapers wrote that the church was out of action for seven weeks before services could be resumed, yet this was not the case. The church did not allow itself to be hindered in its ministry by the attack, resuming services with sheets hung up to cover the damage.

Arson attack causes major damage...



◀ Stained glass window placed inside the Hickes Chapel

## Historical Figures

### Hickes Family

One of the oldest families affiliated with St Mary's are the Hickes. There is an entire chapel inside the building dedicated to them. Their family has been traced back as far as the Saxon tribe that was in this area. The first of the Hickes to really be remembered was Sir Michael Hickes. During his time in Leyton, he lived in a well-known Manor on Ruckholt Road where he completely restored the building. Sir Michael worked as the Queen's chief minister, and as a result of being well liked at court, Queen Elizabeth I visited him in his Leyton home in 1597. There is a written account that he would receive a knighthood and in anticipation he prepared a speech, but when the time came to give it, he froze. This account says he did not receive the knighthood from the Queen; however many other accounts show that years later, he was offered another opportunity and was knighted by King James I in 1604.

The monuments were part of an elaborate altar-tomb that was originally located on the east wall of the chancel, but were moved as its position meant that communion was a cumbersome affair where the vicar would have to go from pew to pew to offer the sacrament. When the chancel was built in 1693, the decorated panels were moved to



▲ Sir Michael Hickes in full armour, d.1612.



▲ Elizabeth Hickes d. 1635, wife to Sir Michael Hickes.

the chancel's south wall while new monuments to Sir William Hickes and his family were added to the north wall. The entire Hickes monument collection was later moved in 1853 to the chapel under the tower now known as the 'Hickes Chapel.'



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▲ Sir William Hickes (The father) in a recumbent position in the middle of the Sir William Hickes Monument, d.1680.

There are several monuments inside the chapel including:

Sir Michael Hickes, d.1612 and his wife Elizabeth Hickes, d.1635. These show the two effigies recumbent, relaxing on their sides and almost touching feet. Sir Michael is dressed in full armour while Elizabeth is made to look very young and beautiful.

The other side of the chapel is monument to Sir William Hickes, d.1702 [grandson to Sir Michael Hickes]. There are three figures, in marble this time: the recumbent one is his father, Sir William Hickes, 1st Baronet, d.1680 [Eldest Son to Sir Michael]. The standing figures are Sir William Hickes, and his wife, Lady Marthagnes, d.1723.

It is not clear to whom credit should be given to for any of these monuments, but the monument to Sir William the son is believed to have been completed during his lifetime and may be the work of Bartholomew Adye.

▼ Sir William Hickes (the son) on the left-hand side of the monument, d.1702



▼ Lady Marthagnes, wife to the second Sir William Hickes, d.1723.

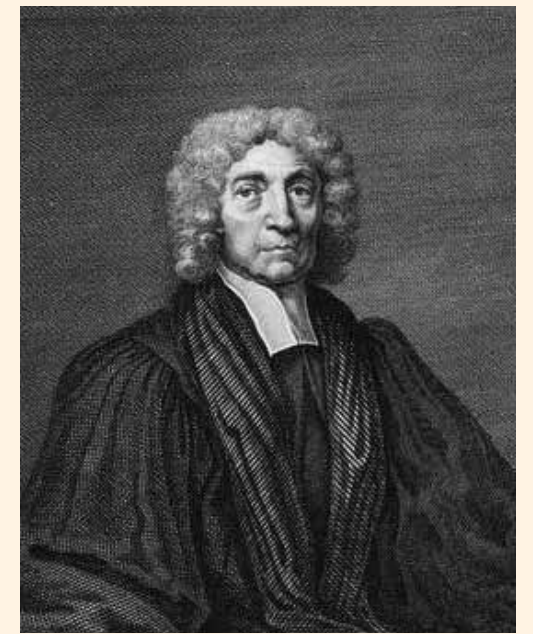


## John Strype

St Mary's Leyton is perhaps best known for the vicar John Strype (b.1643-d.1737). He was St Mary's longest-serving vicar, covering a total of 68 years (1669-1737). However, it's not certain if he was actually inducted as the official vicar of the church, and by the time that he was licensed, he had already been there for five years.

As the youngest of his family, Strype was destined for the church by his father; and once he took over St Mary's, he began repair works on the damaged building. He managed to do £90 of repair works to the church, despite his annual salary at the time being only £16. He is held in such high esteem by the church that, by 1933, the Leyton Antiquarian Society was holding annual commemorations for him.

However, John Strype is not only known for his extremely long time as a vicar; he was also a very accomplished historian and biographer. Many of his major works are biographies of men with titles such as Lord Bishop of London and many Archbishops of Canterbury. A large selection of these can still be found at the British Museum today.



In the South East porch, there is a monument dedicated to him that bears the date 1696, for unknown reasons. It was placed in the South East porch after having been rediscovered in 1932 when the New Chancel was built.

### Strype's major works:

- *The Memorials of Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury (1694)*
- *Life of the learned Sir Thomas Smith (1698)*
- *Life and Acts of John Aylmer, Lord Bishop of London (1701)*
- *Life of the learned Sir John Cheke, with his Treatise on Superstition (1705)*
- *Annals of the Reformation in England (4 volumes: vol. I 1709-1725; vol. II 1725; vol. III 1728; vol. IV 1731, 2nd ed. 1735, 3rd ed. 1736-1738)*
- *Life and Acts of Edmund Grindal, Archbishop of Canterbury (1710)*
- *Life and Acts of Matthew Parker, Archbishop of Canterbury (1711)*
- *Life and Acts of John Whitgift, Archbishop of Canterbury (1718)*
- *A Survey of the Cities of London and Westminster (1720), an updated edition of the original A Survey of London by John Stow (1598, 2nd edition 1603)*
- *Ecclesiastical Memorials (5 vols., 1721; 3 vols., 1733)*



## The Lazarus Box

Also known as a 'poor box' - was once located in the South-East porch after being made in 1626. These boxes were very common during those times to donate money to the poor. This notion was born from the parable Jesus told in the Book of Luke about Dives and Lazarus.

▶  
The Lazarus Box  
Note the unusual  
spelling of 'poor'.



## Communion rail

It is likely, though not definite, that the communion rail was made by Robert "Mouseman" Thompson, a furniture maker from Kilburn, N Yorks. whose 'signature' is a mouse carved into each piece he made.

Robert Thompson, born in 1876 dedicated his life to the craft of carving and joinery in English Oak. He taught himself to use the traditional tools and by 1919 he was experimenting with his own ideas for producing furniture based on the English styles of the 17th Century.

The famous mouse symbol, found on every item crafted by Robert Thompson has an uncertain history. The story told by Robert Thompson himself is that one of his craftsmen remarked that "We are all as poor as church mice", whereupon Robert carved a mouse on the church screen he was working on. That particular mouse has never been found but it has continued as a trade mark of quality and dedication to craftsmen ever since.



▶ The mouse that is hiding away  
on the communion rail.

## Popular Monuments

Above the inscription on a simple panel is a seated girl, reading a book. She is classical, with Roman nose, pure face, rather muscular exposed arm, and perfect feet. She is dressed in a fine drape that starts from her crown, sweeps down around her shoulder, and is caught in loops across and under her thigh, with a hem above the ankle. The viewer is captivated at once by the repeating curves, and that of the youthful figure revealed by the thin drapes.

▶  
John Hillersdon, d.1807, infant brothers  
Edward Harcourt Hillersdon, and William  
Bard Hillersdon, and sister Charlotte Ann  
Hillersdon, d.1781, work of John Flaxman.



▶ The monument is based on a carved panel depicting the Good Samaritan. The central figure is the Samaritan, shown in relief, stooping to place a hand on the shoulder of the collapsed figure by the wayside, his other hand holding a bowl of water to bring relief. To the right, his donkey eats some cabbage-like plant, and behind two clerics walk past unheeding. A clever composition – asymmetrical, but balanced by the similar masses in each half of the panel, and with biding diagonal lines from top left to bottom right, and top right to bottom left.

◀  
William Bosanquet, 1813, second  
son of Samuel and Mary Bosanquet,  
another work by Flaxman.

# The Living Church

St Mary's is still a very active church even 1000 years later and we would love to welcome you to come along and join us for one of our services or activities.

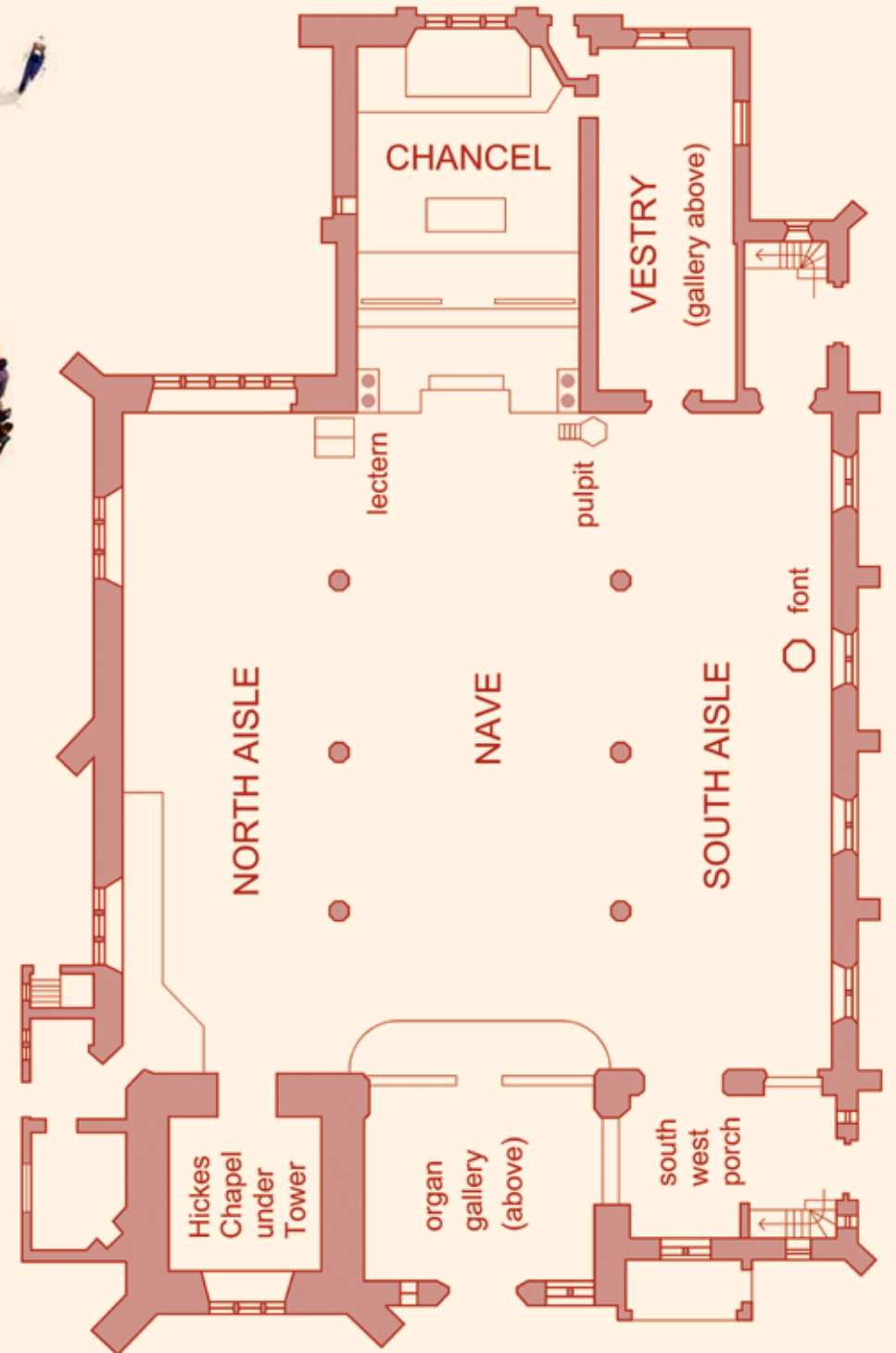
We have a main service on Sunday at 10:30am and it is a lively occasion with singing, prayer, hearing the word of God and responding to it. Children are welcome and there is a Sunday school and crèche facilities.

On the first and third Sundays of the month there is an 8:00am communion service using the Book of Common Prayer which is a quiet, more reflective act of worship. Be assured of a warm welcome as we come together to worship God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

During the week there are several Bible study groups you can choose from until you find one you feel comfortable with, and there is also a Prayer meeting when we meet with God to pray for the community and the world. Every two months we hold 'Messy Church' for children and their caregivers to explore bible stories with craft activities, singing, storytelling and eating together.

As a congregation we try to be involved in the community as much as possible. We have members in the local community forum where we get to know the local council members. We also have people who like to get involved with Christian Kitchen, London City Mission, and many other social aid groups.

We want to welcome anyone and everyone to join in the activities we offer because we love to meet new people and grow the Kingdom of God by sharing the Love of Christ.



We want to welcome you!

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35 Church Road, Leyton E10 5JP  
[www.leytonparishchurch.org.uk](http://www.leytonparishchurch.org.uk)

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