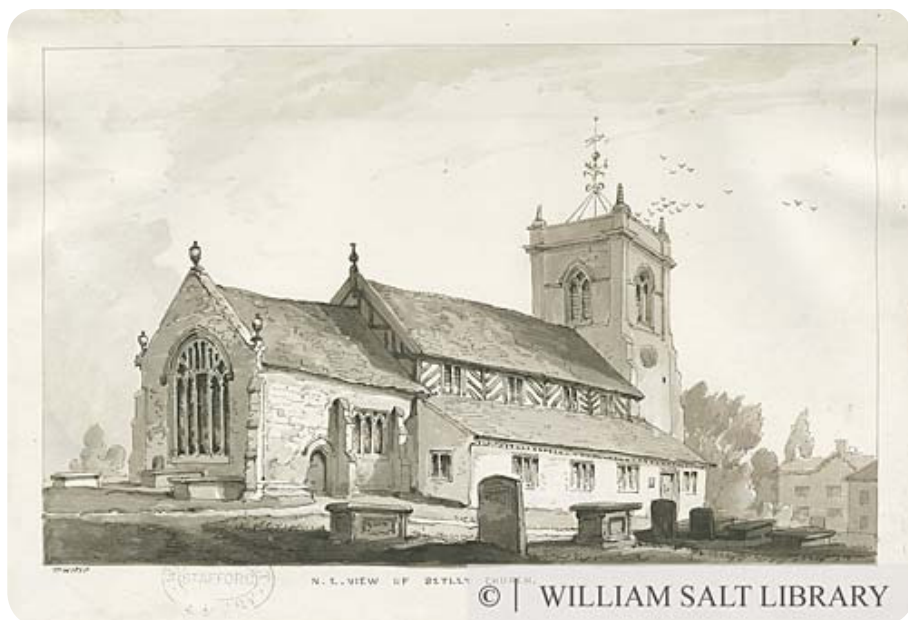


# St Margaret's Church



## A BRIEF HISTORY



Welcome to our Church, its building and its people. St Margaret's is a lively and worshipping community and we are delighted to welcome you into this holy space. We hope that the building itself will encourage you to catch a glimpse of our loving God who is the focus for our worship and the inspiration for our action. We are always conscious of those who have

gone before us and we thank God for their lives, their hard work in stewarding this building and their service to this community. You are most welcome to sit quietly in reflection, to take a magazine, to look at the displays and of course to join us for Sunday worship (commonly at 9.30 am).

Enjoy this booklet, your visit and the peace and vibrancy of this, God's house and let us know if we can support you in any way. May God bless you,

*Vicar Peter and all at St Margaret's*

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## **EXTERIOR OF THE CHURCH**

The church is believed to date from the early 13th century, possibly 1247. A Charter (now lost and of uncertain date) recorded the grant of this slightly raised ground in the centre of Betley to "Blessed Mary of Betley".

In 1638 a steeple was added on the West Wall. This was replaced in 1690 but it blew down in a storm the following year and was again rebuilt in 1693. It is unclear whether this is the current tower, or whether this dates from 1713 when further building work took place and a ring of 5 bells cast in 1711, was installed. Three of these bells are in their original state and are rung each Sunday as part of the present ring of six.

The Church has quite a rosy glow in sunlight. The external building material is sandstone (Chester Pebble Bed Formation). It is likely

that the stone came from quarries along Heighley Lane about 2 miles away. Some materials may have come from Heighley Castle after it was ruined during the Civil War (ended in 1646) and used to build the new stone church tower constructed in 1690-93.

The Church is surrounded by a traditional graveyard. The old graveyard is now closed to further burials, but there is an open burial ground on the other side of the lane. The oldest

monuments date from 1557. One of the most unusual memorials is to Mary Malpass aged 15 who was murdered. Strangely it names the alleged perpetrator as Thomas Baggueley, but doubt has been cast on his guilt in recent times. Many of the 'old' Betley aristocracy mentioned in this booklet are buried here.



The main gateway is of more recent construction and is composed of Hollington sandstone from either Alton or Shropshire. The cast iron railings date from 1856 and are painted black with gold finials. Recent discussions with the Local Conservation Committee suggest these are of some historical importance.

The sentinel yew trees either side of the Church path are several hundred years old. (Yew trees grow very slowly!)

The present church clock was installed in the Tower by public subscription in 1978 in memory of Charles Fletcher Twemlow of Doddlespool Hall who had recently died. There had been an earlier clock, the mechanism of which is in Nantwich Museum.

## **INTERIOR - GENERAL**

St. Margaret's is essentially a timber church and is said to be, with the exception of the church at Rushton Spencer, the only church in the country which retains so much timber in its construction. This is clearly seen in the Nave with its arcades of four bays and the timber roof supports. The wood which was used is Spanish (Sweet) Chestnut and the pillars of the arcades each consist of a single tree trunk.

Originally, the Church would have been served by a curate under the Vicar of Audley. The present dedication to St. Margaret of Antioch is probably of medieval origin as in 1220, the Lords of Betley were granted the right to hold a weekly market and also an annual fair, the latter being on the feast of St. Margaret (20th July). It became independent from Audley in the early 17th century when Ralph Egerton of Wrinehill, whose family held the manor of Betley at that time, left land for a house and an annual income of £10 for a preaching minister. He also had the Chancel built in 1610.

The north and side aisles are the work of the famous church architect, Gilbert Scott.

In 1716, a faculty was sought and obtained for the building of a gallery at the west end. This remained until 1957 when it was demolished because it was heavily infested with furniture beetle and was unsafe.

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### **THE FONT**

As you entered you will have seen the font.

It is probably from c13 century. It is composed of a cylindrical stem with moulded base, and quatrefoil section basin.



## ***THE THICKNESSE CHAPEL***

The Thicknesse Chapel in the north aisle is surrounded by a screen which dates from the 14th or 15th centuries and is also of Spanish Chestnut. This chapel was originally in Balterley Hall, the seat of the Thicknesse family who were ancient landowners in Betley and Balterley.



Later it passed to the Twemlow family of Betley Court which accounts for their coat of arms being on the ceiling hatchment. St. Margaret is depicted in the window on the north wall.

The chapel is now used for mid-week prayers and for signing the register at weddings.

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## ***MONUMENT OF RALPH AND FRANCES EGERTON***

There is an impressive wall monument to Ralph and his wife Frances on the left hand side in the chancel. Behind Frances kneels a daughter, behind Ralph originally knelt a son. The figure was stolen about 1953.



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## ***THE ORGAN***

The organ was installed around 1840 when a major restoration of the church took place. It is a splendid Victorian instrument which was rebuilt and enlarged in 1969 and had a major renovation again in 1996 paid for by the generosity of the people of Betley.

The Jacobean pulpit was donated by Frances Egerton (wife of Ralph Egerton) in 1616 and was probably originally a three-decker pulpit of which the bottom part survives.

### **THE CHANCEL COMMUNION TABLE**

The Communion Table was designed by Mike Reeves of Betley, based on a design brought back from Italy by St Aldhelm (640-709) after visiting the Pope. It is designed in such a way as to avoid obscuring the view of the Sanctuary Communion Table below the East window. The plans were then sent to Keith Phillips of Madeley, who made the table in October 2003.



### **STAINED GLASS WINDOW IN THE SOUTH EAST AISLE**

Next to the pulpit there is a stained glass window which was dedicated by Mr & Mrs Tatham, (who resided at Doddlespool Hall), to the memory of their sons Basil and Lionel. Basil was killed in action during the First World War, and Lionel was only 11 years old when he died.

The window has two bays. The first is a picture of a 12 year old boy, St. Tarsicius who was killed carrying the Blessed Sacrament to Christians in prison who were condemned to death. At the bottom of the picture are the words "*Blessed are the pure in heart*". The second bay is of St George with the slain dragon at his feet - underneath are the words "*I have fought the good fight.*"

Below the window is a brass inscription "*This window is dedicated by their parents to the glory of God in memory of Lionel Trevor Tatham Born 12 Oct 1882 Died 22 May 1894, and Basil Owen Tatham Capt. 3rd Bn E Yorks Regt Born 25 January 1884 Killed in action at Ypres Belgium on 23 April 1915.*" The inscription ends with the regimental badge of the East Yorkshire Regiment.



## **THE WAR MEMORIAL WINDOW**

This window is dedicated to the men of Betley, who fought and died in both the 1914 - 18 and the 1939 - 45 world wars.

There is a Roll of Honour, situated by the window, that lists their names.

Research into the lives of the men associated with Betley who were killed in World War 1 and World War 2 has also been carried out. Their names, and all that is known about their lives is recorded in the book "Lest we Forget".




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## **CHILDREN'S CORNER**

During the church alterations in 2003, four pews were removed in front of the pulpit which left space for a children's corner. These pews were recycled and used to make storage cupboards by Keith Phillips of Madeley. In 2006 there was a need, due to a successful mother and toddler group, to purchase children's furniture.

In 2007, six panels were donated by Kim-Marie and John Stephenson in thanksgiving for their grandchildren. The panels act as a little fence to keep the children safe from the Chancel steps, during church services; the panels are silhouettes of children linking hands.

During our more recent re-ordering, we upgraded our kitchen and toilet areas.

## THE BENEFACTION BOARDS



In the 16th and 17th century the church received a number of benefactions, details of which can be seen on the charity boards at the west end of the nave.

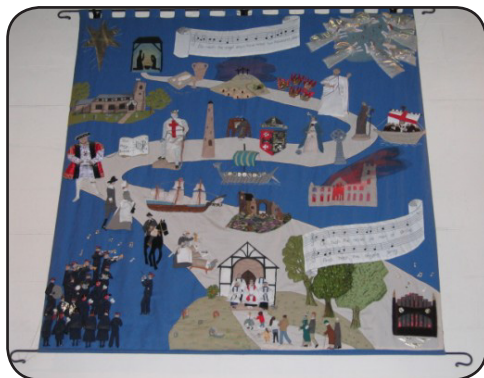
Bequests were made for the instruction of poor children, apprenticeships and relief. By today's standards the sums of money involved seem paltry but they were sizeable amounts for the time - so much so that distribution from these bequests still continues today.

In more recent times these have been amalgamated into one Trust and named The Betley Trust.

## THE MILLENNIUM TAPESTRY

The Millennium Tapestry is situated on the west wall above the Vestry door. It was researched and designed by Mrs. Thelma Peake and produced by St. Margaret's Tapestry Group.

It was inspired by the hymn '*It came upon the midnight clear*' using the lines:



*"Beneath the angel-strain have rolled  
Two thousand years of wrong;  
O hush the noise of mortal strife  
And hear the angels sing!"*

It tells the story of the spread of Christianity from Bethlehem to Betley. Please refer to the key nearby on the wall.