

## Interior of East Lexham by 'Lyn Stilgoe

The church is entered by the south porch, where one walks over the familiar tapered shape of an old coffin slab to the Early English doorway. One is then confronted with a totally different time. The north doorway is blocked, and holds a painted panel of a lively St Michael dealing with the Devil: a moving memorial to the seven local men who gave their lives for their country during 1914-1918.

The whole church shows signs of a heavy restoration, probably at the time of the new roof with '1837 Curtis Builder' on one of the beams. However there are still things of interest to be discovered. The nave and the chancel are of the same width with the north and south walls being continuous, a sign of an early church. There is no sign of a chancel arch, although the beams above the change is filled in to give some indication of the more important status of the chancel.

Near the south doorway is a modest C19 font with neatly carved tracery and fleurons on the bowl. High on the west wall is a set of Hanoverian Royal Arms, with 'Geo IV. Dieu et mon Droit' written along the bottom rail. Hanover became a kingdom in 1816 and George IV reigned from 1820-30. Just below are black Decalogue Boards, presumably once set in the east window recess above the altar, showing the ten commandments in gold letters.

The entrance to the rood stairs, about half way along the south wall, has been converted to a useful cupboard by the addition of a wooden door covered with patterned ironwork.

Entering the chancel the east window glass was probably made by Clayton and Bell and was given in memory of two Keppels who died in 1858 and 1859. In the centre is a Crucifixion scene, with Christ carrying his cross and the Deposition in the tomb on either side. Below are illustrations of the Annunciation, the Nativity and the Presentation of Christ in the Temple. In the angle are two angels announcing 'He is risen' above two sleeping soldiers. These are flanked by the witnesses of the Resurrection.

On the north chancel wall are further Keppel memorials. This family owned the early C18 East Lexham Hall from 1806- 1912. There is a fine C14 angle piscine with a carved ogee arch facing the altar and a smaller rounded arch facing west above the dropped sill sedilia. Both arches have cinquefoil cusping and close by in the east wall is a tall niche, with septfoil cusping.

Most of the woodwork in the church, the pews and the pulpit date from the C19th, but the altar is Jacobean. There are also two sanctuary chairs of note. One is the Bishop's chair, which has a row of peg holes along its top rails, where there was once some form of extension. This has a very ornately carved solid back. The other incorporates three misericords, perhaps from Castle Acre Priory. The sides of the chair were once bench ends.

Beneath the carpet in front of the altar is a ledger stone remembering William Allee, who died in January 1694 at the age of 'fower score and three: he was beloved of riche, pious to poor, fewe in his time living deserved more.'



*misericord seat*