

## Old Catton, St Margarets. Interior by R Barham

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In 1781, Armstrong, in his History of the County of Norfolk, wrote 'Catton is a very pleasant village and the residence of many opulent manufacturers, who have retired from Norwich and built elegant houses. The air is reckoned very healthful and many invalids resort thither for the benefits of it.' These words give us the clue that there was wealth in the parish, and it comes as no surprise that the church was enlarged and restored during the 1850s, the result being that most of the present fittings of the church date from that period. A western gallery was erected in 1778 and was financed by the sale of the three bells which hung in the tower. The remaining bell and the gallery are still in place.

The Reverent Richard Hart was the incumbent from 1836 to 1875; he was a noted Antiquary and provided the impetus for the rebuilding of 1850 to 1851. He added the south aisle and turned the existing north aisle into what now seems to be a double north transept. The pews in the transept unusually face to the south, and they are marked a 'Free' so were available to the poorest inhabitants. Hart added shields showing coats of arms to the organ gallery (see Bill Goode's photo on left) and the roof and several of them appear to have come from his own imagination! Financial help for the changes which Hart made came from the Morse family, who were at Catton Hall from 1835-52, and then from the Gurney See memorial on right) and Huxton families who were there from 1852. The Morse family were well known in the Norwich brewing industry. A memorial to George Morse, who died 1852, is on the north wall of the transept.



A further restoration, carried out in 1881, under the architect R.M. Phipson, resulted in the move of the fine memorial to Hussy Greene from the chancel to the east wall of the transept. This memorial has a sarcophagus in front of an obelisk with two sad putti wringing hands and wiping away a tear. There are several other memorials around the walls, including one to Jeremiah Ives, a Mayor of Norwich and 'always an active magistrate in the county', sculptured by Sir Richard Westmacott of London, and one in the south aisle to Sir Samuel and Lady Bignold who died in 1875 and 1860 respectively. Sir Samuel's father,

Thomas Bignold, is commemorated by the east window in the south aisle. Thomas died in 1835 but the south aisle was not erected until 1850. The Bignold family lived at Catton Old Hall and Thomas was the founder of the Norwich Union Insurance Group.

On the east wall of the chancel is a very Victorian memorial to Timothy Adams. This memorial as exhibited at the Crystal Palace Exhibition of 1851 and 'was much admired'.

The pulpit (Plunkett photo, third on right) which dominates the small nave is of special interest. It is dated 1537 and was purchased for the church by the Revd. Richard Hart. It originally stood in the Norwich church of St George Colegate, given by Robert Jannys who was Mayor of Norwich in 1517 and 1524. He died in 1530 so the pulpit was installed after his death. It has linenfold panels separated by turned balusters.

The organ which stands on the west gallery, was given by Samuel Gurney Buxton in 1880, and there is a memorial tablet in his memory on the east wall of the transept.

Several windows are glazed with Victorian stained glass, and that in the south east corner of the chancel is a memorial to the Revd. Richard Hart who died in 1875 having completely transformed the interior of the church. Hidden in the tower are two very dark hatchments to members of the Ives family, and a board giving details of local charities.