



# ST CLEMENT'S CHURCH

KNOWLTON, KENT



## THE CHURCHES CONSERVATION TRUST

89 Fleet Street · London EC4Y 1DH

*Registered Charity No. 258612*

PRICE: £1.50





THE CHURCHES CONSERVATION  
TRUST WELCOMES YOU TO  
ST CLEMENT'S CHURCH  
KNOWLTON, KENT

*Many years ago Christians built and set apart this place for prayer. They made their church beautiful with their skill and craftsmanship. Here they have met for worship, for children to be baptised, for couples to be married and for the dead to be brought for burial. If you have time, enjoy the history, the peace and the holiness here. Please use the prayer card and, if you like it, you are welcome to take a folded copy with you.*

*Although services are no longer regularly held here, this church remains consecrated; inspiring, teaching and ministering through its beauty and atmosphere. It is one of more than 300 churches throughout England cared for by The Churches Conservation Trust. The Trust was created in 1969 and was, until 1994, known as the Redundant Churches Fund. Its object is to ensure that all these churches are kept in repair and cared for, in the interests of the Church and Nation, for present and future generations.*

*Please help us to care for this church. There is a box for donations or, if you prefer to send a gift, it will be gratefully received at the Trust's headquarters at 89 Fleet Street, London EC4Y 1DH (Registered Charity No. 258612).*

*We hope that you will enjoy your visit and be encouraged to see our other churches. Some are in towns; some in remote country districts. Some are easy and others hard to find but all are worth the effort.*

Nearby are the Trust churches of:

**CAPEL-LE-FERNE, ST MARY**  
*3½ miles NE of Folkestone off B2011*

**SANDWICH ST MARY**  
*Strand Street*

**SANDWICH ST PETER**  
*Town Centre*

**WEST STOURMOUTH, ALL SAINTS**  
*4 miles N of Wingham off B2046*

## ST CLEMENT'S CHURCH

---

KNOWLTON, KENT

*by* ROY TRICKER

### APPROACHING KNOWLTON

Knowlton, one of Kent's smallest communities, is situated some five miles south-west of Sandwich. Just over a mile north-east of Nonington, on the road which continues to Woodnesborough, the view westwards over delightful countryside includes Chillenden's 19th century post-mill and its Norman church, which now serves also as the parish church of Knowlton. To the east is the wooded parkland of Knowlton. By the roadside is a distinctive memorial, based on a mediaeval preaching cross, which was erected in 1919 by George Frampton RA in honour of the twelve Knowlton men (out of a population of only 39 souls) who enlisted for service in World War I prior to 1915 and, as a result, won a national newspaper competition run by the *Weekly Dispatch* for England's bravest village. Their names are inscribed on the base of the memorial, with portrait profiles of King George V and Queen Mary, whilst at the top of the shaft four figures look out across the countryside.

At the entrance to the tree-lined avenue which forms the drive to Knowlton Court is a red-brick lodge, designed in 1912 by Sir Edwin Lutyens. Just to the north of this, and running parallel with the drive, is the lane leading to Knowlton – a remote and rural spot, with just the church, and a handful of dwellings and farm buildings, in the shadow of Knowlton Court. Parts of the house date from the second half of the 17th century and others from alterations made in the early 18th century. The house and grounds were remodelled further by Reginald Blomfield in 1904, and in 1912 the drawing room was transformed by Sir Edwin Lutyens. The house and grounds are private property and are not open to the public.

## HISTORY

What was until recently the parish of Knowlton comprised only 432 acres (175 hectares). Its name is thought to derive from its comparatively high position, on a knoll. In Domesday Book (1086) it was called 'Chenoltone' and a little later it had become 'Cnoltone'. It then formed part of the vast landholding owned by Odo, Bishop of Bayeux, the brother of William the Conqueror. Since then several families have held the manor, members of which are commemorated by memorials and coats of arms in the church.

Knowlton is the name of an ancient family which probably originated here. Maybe they were once known as 'de Knowlton', i.e. people who came from Knowlton. There were several Knowltons residing in Kent and Middlesex in the 16th century, and in 1632 Captain William Knowlton sailed from London to Nova Scotia to settle in America.

The **Pyrot** (or **Perot**) family were here until c.1278 and are believed to have first built the church. Then came the **Langleys** (here for about 240 years), followed by the **Ringleys** for a brief period, until Sir Richard **Peyton** came in 1543. Sir John **Narborough** purchased Knowlton in 1685 and in 1707 it passed by marriage to the **D'Aeth** family, three generations of which were Baronets here. On the death of the third Baronet in 1808, the manor passed to his cousin George William **Hughes**, who then added D'Aeth to his name by Royal Licence. This family remained until the manor was sold in 1897. In the early years of the 20th century the **Speeds** purchased Knowlton and its present owner is a member of this family.

Knowlton has always been a small community and it is largely thanks to the generosity of the families who owned the manor that its church has been maintained so beautifully over the years. In 1991 it was vested in The Churches Conservation Trust to be preserved and conserved by and for the Church and the Nation. Since then it has undergone a series of structural repairs, carried out by Fuller's of Faversham, under the direction of Mr Jonathan Carey, architect.

## EXTERIOR

The church stands only about 50 yards (45.7 m) from the service wing of the mansion (part of the c.1715 additions) and the **churchyard**, which is partly shaded by trees, is bordered on its eastern side by the garden wall. Amongst the churchyard memorials are some 18th century **headstones** to

the south of the church, carved with cherubs which are characteristic of the period. This style has been attractively reproduced in two 20th century headstones to members of the Speed family, near the east wall of the chancel.

The **walls** of St Clement's are faced with local flints, and much of the stonework in the present **windows** and **doorways** dates from two restorations, which took place in 1841 and 1855 (the latter to William White's designs). Details of what each of these restorations accomplished have yet to be discovered, and it may be that some of the windows are reproductions of the mediaeval originals.

The large single windows in the chancel may have replaced double 14th century ones and the three-light east window reproduces the Decorated (early 14th century) style. The north and south walls of the nave each have a three-light window (reproducing late 14th century architecture, when Decorated was evolving into Perpendicular) and a doorway in the style of the late 15th century. The south doorway has either side of its arch the arms of D'Aeth (west) and Narborough (east), and above is the large coat of arms of George and Harriet Hughes D'Aeth, who were married from 1816 until her death in 1864. The arch of the north doorway could well be original and bears the arms of the Langleys and the Pyrots, who owned the manor in the Middle Ages. These arms also appear each side of the three-light west window, above which is the lozenge-shaped face of the single-handed clock, which may date back to the 17th century. The **bell** in the 19th century gabled **bell-cote** was cast at Whitechapel, London, in 1821. When Hasted described the church (c.1800) there was – 'a small wooden tower at the west end, containing a clock and one bell – maybe this was a wooden bell-turret, like that at nearby Chillenden.

## INTERIOR

Many of the internal features date from the 1841 and 1851 restorations. The memorials here are of interest, as is also the arrangement of the furnishings. These show what the interior of a small 'estate church' such as this would have looked like before the Victorians, under the influence of the Oxford Movement, refurnished so many churches on mediaeval lines. The Victorian glass in the windows, and the trees which overshadow the north side of the church, create a dim 'devotional dusk' inside the building.

The proportions are unusual, because the chancel ( $28\frac{1}{2}\text{ft} \times 15\frac{1}{2}\text{ft}$ ,  $8.7 \times 4.7\text{m}$ ) is almost as long as the nave ( $30\text{ft} \times 17\text{ft}$ ,  $9.1 \times 5.2\text{m}$ ), making the church appear rather long and cavernous, punctuated only by the 19th century **chancel arch** and set beneath plaster **ceilings**. These, unusually, are independent of the wooden arch-braces which strengthen the roof and rest upon plain stone corbels. The **floors** are paved with black and white marble slabs, dating probably from the early 18th century.

Many of the furnishings probably date from 1841, rather than 1855, because of their pre-Gothic Revival arrangement. Most of the nave benches have buttressed ends and doors, creating **pews**, which were no doubt rented by the families which occupied them. In their backs and beneath their seats is reused **panelling** from the 17th century box-pews which they replaced. At the west end is seating for the choir (or possibly for the children), from which doors lead to the clock-weights on the south side and, on the north side, to a ladder giving access to the clock itself. Near the south doorway is a most unusual **poor-box**, which bears the date 1655 and 'Remember the Poore', inscribed in English, French and German.

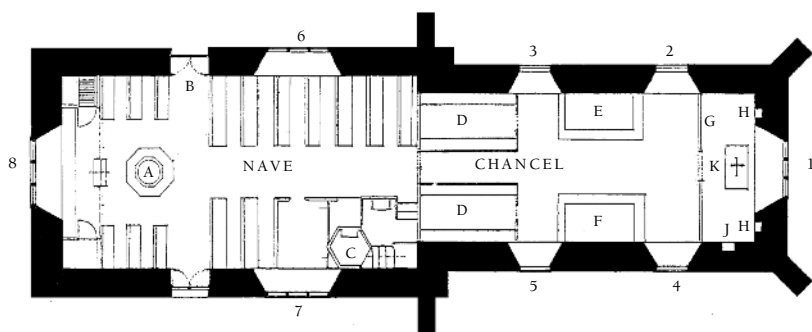
The octagonal **font** has a traceried stem, supporting a bowl where four shields with coats of arms alternate with the inscription 'Suffer little children to come unto me'. On the north-west and south-east shields are the arms of the Langleys, whilst those on the north-east and south-west show those of other past Knowlton families. Although the faded inscription is probably a 19th century addition, this is certainly the font described by Hasted in 1800 and it may well date from the 17th century. Its oak **cover** is also in the style of this period.

Rising from the pews on the south side of the nave is the three-decker **pulpit** – clearly of 1841, but built in the 17th century style, with mock Stuart blank arcading and still furnished with its red velvet trimmings. Pulpits like this formed the focal point of church interiors before the mid-19th century when the Victorian restorers threw so many of them out. The small western 'deck' is the Clerk's desk. He announced hymn tunes, led responses, boomed out Amens and generally kept his eye on the congregation. Behind it is the reading-desk, from which the priest read the services. From the third 'deck' (the actual pulpit) he delivered the sermon.

*Looking across the nave, towards the font and Royal Arms* (CHRISTOPHER DALTON)



Plan of Saint Clement's Church  
(From a plan kindly supplied by Mr Jonathan Carey, architect)



- |                                |                        |
|--------------------------------|------------------------|
| A Font                         | F D'Aeth monument      |
| B Royal arms on the wall above | G Communion rails      |
| C Three-decker pulpit          | H 15th century niches  |
| D Family pews                  | J 15th century piscina |
| E Narborough monument          | K Communion table      |

Numbers 1–8 indicate the order in which the windows are described in the text

This part retains one genuine 17th century panel in the side which is against the south wall. An enclosure to the west of the pulpit contains a reed **organ**, made by Guelph of Ontario.

Each side of the chancel are **family pews**, which are embellished with wooden 'pinnacles' at their corners and mock 17th century decoration on their fronts and sides. These were doubtless for the residents of Knowlton Court and perhaps also the Rectory family. This was often the custom before later 19th century restorers replaced such worldly furnishings in chancels with choir stalls. The **gates** into the chancel are an unusual feature.

The beautifully turned **communion rails** date from c.1716. Such rails were originally ordered by Archbishop Laud in the 1630s so that dogs should not defile the sanctuary. The **altar table** is of similar date, although the panel behind it, which forms a simple **reredos**, is later. Beneath it are inscribed Our Lord's final words from the cross 'It is finished', possibly put here in good Protestant fashion to dispel any ideas of the Eucharist being a perpetuation of Christ's sacrifice at Calvary. The lower part of the east

wall is lined with 18th century panelling, but the four **marble panels** containing the Lord's Prayer, Ten Commandments and Apostles' Creed, are a memorial to the Revd Cloudesley Hughes D'Aeth, who was Rector here from 1862 until his death, aged only 39, in 1869.

The **niches** flanking the east window (which are not identical) were fashioned in the 15th century to contain statues. Also of this date is the **piscina** in the south wall, into which was poured the water which had been used at the Eucharist.

The church retains the two 19th century metal **coronas**, which provided candlelight before the days of electricity, which was not installed here until 1966. That in the chancel (for twelve lights) is another memorial to the Revd Cloudesley Hughes D'Aeth (d.1869), whilst the nave corona (for eight lights) is in memory of the Revd Charles J Hughes D'Aeth who, having been Rector here from 1851–62, later became Rector of Cardynham, Cornwall until his death in 1890. Both were sons of George WH D'Aeth; their younger brother, Wyndham Charles Hardy Hughes D'Aeth, was also a priest and was Rector of Buckhorn Weston, Dorset.

## STAINED GLASS

When Hasted visited Knowlton c.1800 there were shields with the arms of Langley, Peyton, Calthorp and Pyrot in the windows. These were replaced later in the 19th century with Victorian glass. Unlike mediaeval glass, this does not admit much light into the church, but it shows the high-quality craftsmanship of its period. Most of the windows were given as memorials or thank-offerings. Following the numbers on the plan opposite, they are as follows:

1. The **chancel east window** shows three scenes from the life of Christ – his Nativity, with an ass nearby; his journey to Calvary and conversation with the 'Daughters of Jerusalem'; and the risen Christ, with Mary Magdalene. This window was given in memory of Harriet Hughes D'Aeth by her husband and children.

The four **side windows in the chancel** were made by Lavers, Barraud & Westlake in 1875, and were given (almost certainly by the D'Aeths) as thank-offerings 'For many unasked blessings' (south) and 'For many unmerited mercies' (north). In each window are two roundels, with every

roundel made up of four scenes which are especially related to a New Testament character, whose presence is clearly identifiable in each scene. These are as follows:

2. The Blessed Virgin Mary.
3. St Peter.
4. St John the Evangelist.
5. St Paul.
6. In memory of George, son of Admiral GW Hughes D'Aeth (d.1866); with the woman at the well of Samaria, surrounded by foliage designs.
7. In memory of EA Hughes D'Aeth (d.1855): St Paul's shipwreck off the island of Malta, the Parable of the Good Samaritan and Jesus walking on the water.
8. In memory of George William Hughes D'Aeth (d.1873). This window, given by his children, is the work of Lavers, Barraud & Westlake, and depicts six scenes involving either water or children, as befits the window near the font. The upper scenes show the Baptism of Jesus (central), flanked by two scenes of Jesus with children. The lower scenes are from the Old Testament, showing the return of the dove to Noah in the ark, Moses crossing the Red Sea and Naaman the leper about to bathe in the River Jordan for healing. At the very summit of this window is the face of St Clement of Rome, the church's Patron Saint, wearing the triple crown of a Pope.

## MEMORIALS

The collection of memorials here forms one of the church's greatest features. Some furnishings and windows given as memorials have already been described. Other memorial inscriptions on the walls, floors and monuments are as follows:

### Ledger slabs in the floors

**Nave** – towards the west end

- John Tanner (1715). He was Steward on this estate for 21 years and was killed, aged 73, by a fall from his horse.

- Richard Ladd (1748). John's successor as Steward, for 33 years.
- Inscription now too worn to be read, but the date 1640 is visible.

**Nave** – east

- Robert Skyring (1728), also Robert, his father (1753) who was Rector here for 40 years, Mary, his mother (1771) and Mary, his sister (1773).

### Chancel

- Thomas Peyton, the young son of the Lord of the Manor. His death, according to the inscription, 'Left us an example of the frailty of all virtuous and hopeful young men.'
- Small stone to Elizabeth (1640), infant daughter of Sir Thomas Peyton, also Elizabeth, her mother.

### Sanctuary

- Thomas Peyton.
- Anna, his wife.
- Sir Samuel Peyton.

The Peytons were Lords of the Manor during the 17th century.

## WALL PLAQUES AND OTHER MONUMENTS

**Nave**

- 2nd Lieut. Ronald Douglas Elmer Speed (1940). Brass.
- Narborough Hughes D'Aeth (1886). Son of Admiral GW and Mrs H Hughes D'Aeth. Brass.
- Brigadier Elmer John Leyland Speed (1959). Brass.
- 1st Lieut. Edward H Hughes D'Aeth (brother of Narborough Hughes D'Aeth). He was wounded in 1855 at the Siege of Sebastopol and died of cholera the following year. Marble.
- Major Francis Elmer Speed (1928). Brass.
- Eleanor, wife of Francis Elmer Speed (1952). Brass.
- Lieut. George Graham Hughes D'Aeth. He died at Fort Meade, Florida in 1892. Brass.



- John Langley (1519). } A pair of cartouches, in Latin,
- John Peyton (1560). } erected by Thomas Peyton.
- Lt. Col. Lewis Narborough Hughes D'Aeth (1920). He sold Knowlton in 1897.
- Elizabeth Osborn (1642). A fine wall-plaque above the south doorway.

#### Chancel north

- A splendid monument to **Sir John Narborough and Mr James Narborough**, sons of Sir John Narborough, Admiral of the Fleet. These two brothers went on a voyage with their father-in-law (who also became their step-father, because he had married their widowed mother), the great Sir Cloudesley Shovel, who was Queen Anne's Admiral and Commander of the Fleet. Unfortunately they were shipwrecked on the rocks off the Isles of Scilly on the night of 22 October 1707. The front panel of this tomb has a dramatic carving of the shipwreck, and this carving has similarities to another on the Admiral's own tomb, by Grinling Gibbons, in Westminster Abbey. As their mother erected this monument, it may well also be by Gibbons. It is indeed an impressive piece of craftsmanship, with coats of arms and an upper section with the inscription (including some flattering lines about the two brothers) which is crowned by urns and flanked by cherubs.
- On the wall above is a large wall plaque to **Mrs Elhannah D'Aeth**, who died in 1737. Also commemorated here is **her husband Thomas** (1708), who was buried at North Cray, but whose remains were later moved here.
- **Sir Narborough D'Aeth**, son of Sir Narborough and Dame Anne D'Aeth (1808) is commemorated by a wall plaque with an urn, weeping willows and a coat of arms. At the foot of the plaque is a pelican, and an open book, inscribed 'He that hath a bountiful eye shall be blessed'. (*Proverbs* 25, verse 9).
- **Samuel Peyton**, who died aged 10 in 1623, has a plaque with a broken pediment and coat of arms at the top, and small drapes at the bottom.

*Monument to the shipwrecked Narborough brothers, on the north side of the chancel*  
(CHRISTOPHER DALTON)

### Chancel south

- **Thomas Peyton** (1610) has a plaque adorned with garlands at the sides and with three coats of arms at the top.
- A large tomb-chest commemorates **Sir John Narborough** (1688), who was the father of the two shipwrecked brothers. There are coats of arms in small cartouches each side. Also commemorated here are his daughter Ann (1685) and son Isack (1686/7 – according to which calendar was followed during that year).
- On top of this tomb-chest is a medallion profile portrait of **Lady Elizabeth D'Aeth**, only daughter of Admiral Sir John Narborough. She was the mother of 12 children (only two of which survived her) and she died in childbed in 1721 at the early age of 39.

### Hatchment

- The diamond-shaped hatchment on the nave wall commemorates **Mrs Harriet Hughes D'Aeth** (née Knatchbull and wife of Admiral G W Hughes D'Aeth) who died in 1864.

Hatchments were displayed for a while outside the home of the deceased person and were later removed to the parish church for permanent display.

## THE ROYAL ARMS

Knowlton's magnificent Royal Arms, delicately carved in wood, also painted and gilded, are important enough to have merited illustration in H Munro Cautley's **Royal Arms and Commandments in our Churches**. They date from the Stuart period and may well have been made in 1660 or just after. Although the arms of earlier monarchs were placed in some churches, King Charles II, at the Restoration of the Monarchy in 1660, ordered that all churches should display them (above the chancel arch, where possible) to remind the faithful of the position of the Monarch as the temporal Head of the Church of England.



*The Royal Arms*

(CHRISTOPHER DALTON)

*Front cover: The exterior from the south-east* (CHRISTOPHER DALTON).

*Back cover: The interior looking westwards, showing the family pews in the chancel and the three-decker pulpit* (CHRISTOPHER DALTON).

© The Churches Conservation Trust 1998

Series 4 no. 79

February 1997