

= St Margaret 's Church , Ifield =

St Margaret 's Church is an Anglican church in the Ifield neighbourhood of Crawley , a town and borough in West Sussex , England . It is the ancient parish church of the village of Ifield ; the medieval settlement was expanded to form one of the New Town of Crawley 's 13 neighbourhoods , and the church 's modern parish now serves several other neighbourhoods as well .

The present building incorporates the chancel from a 13th @-@ century church which may have replaced a wooden building of two or three centuries earlier . Additions in the 14th century included stone effigies representing a knight and his wife , considered to be excellent examples of such sculptures . More structural changes took place at regular intervals , and a major Victorian restoration by architect Somers Clarke included an extension to the nave and a new tower . English Heritage has listed the church at Grade I because of its architectural and historical importance .

The churchyard has many old tombs and monuments , including writer Mark Lemon 's grave and an elaborately decorated table tomb , which is listed separately by English Heritage at Grade II . Further memorials adorn the interior walls . Internal fixtures include a 12th @-@ century font with unusual decorative carvings .

= = History = =

The ancient parish of Ifield covered about 4 @, @ 000 acres (1 @, @ 600 ha) of rural land in the north of Sussex , up to the border with Surrey . It was attached to the priory at nearby Ruspur by the mid @-@ 13th century . The church was built in the centre of the small settlement of Ifield , which was recorded in the Domesday Book of 1086 . The present stone building is believed to stand on the site of an older wooden church ? possibly dating from the 10th or 11th century . The earliest record of a vicar being present at the Church was in 1247 but is simply listed as ' ? ' on the Church 's list although ' Simon ' took over in 1288 and there has been 53 vicars since then .

By the 13th century , the church had a stone @-@ built nave and chancel ; the latter survives in the present building , as does a 12th @-@ century font which was probably taken from the building in place at that time . A chancel arch was inserted between the nave and chancel in about 1300 . The dedication to Saint Margaret is later : it was first recorded in 1489 .

Aisles were added to the nave in the 14th century , first on the north side and then on the south , doubling the seating capacity . More windows were also installed in the nave . A century later , a timber porch was built on the north side , the chancel arch was widened and a rood screen was installed , a standard feature of churches in the medieval era , as were wall decorations and paintings . Ecclesiastical feeling moved in favour of austere , whitewashed walls , screens and pillars by the 17th century , and Parliament decreed these changes in the 1640s . The vicar of Ifield , Reverend Robert Goddin , was a strict Protestant who was strongly opposed to Catholic @-@ style worship , ceremony and church decoration , and he enforced the new style rigorously . The rood screen and all internal decoration were removed at this time .

The next major work took place in 1760 , when a gallery was built for the choir and the pews were replaced with large box @-@ pews taken from St Margaret 's Church , Westminster (the parish church of the Palace of Westminster in London) . More restoration took place in 1785 . In 1847 , the roof was improved and a vestry was built , incorporating wood from one of Crawley 's famous old trees , the " County Oak " , which had been cut down at that time . (The tree marked the ancient county boundary between Sussex and Surrey .) A barrel organ was installed in 1850 . Between 1883 and 1884 , architect and archaeologist Somers Clarke and fellow architect J. T. Micklethwaite built a tall , substantial tower at the west end to replace an earlier small tower over the porch (which had itself replaced the much older bell turret) ; lengthened the nave ; and removed a gallery at the west end of the church .

The exterior walls are of rough @-@ hewn stone , but this has been hidden under modern layers of cement . The church is approached from the east through a lychgate at the end of Ifield Street , the ancient village street .

== Architecture ==

St Margaret 's Church has a chancel , wide nave with a narrow clerestory above and narrow three @-@ bay aisles on the north and south sides , a tall tower (topped with a spire) at the west end and a porch on the north side . The nave , chancel and chancel @-@ arch all date from the 13th century . The aisles and their arcades are largely unaltered from their 14th @-@ century origins : between them they feature various mouldings and designs typical of that period , including chamfered arches , octagonal columns and squinch corners . Many of the windows also date from that century , while others are a century later ; trefoil @-@ headed designs predominate , but there are some larger square @-@ headed Perpendicular Gothic windows as well . Several other windows contain stained glass . The roof of the nave is tall and steeply pitched , with substantial king posts and tie @-@ beams . It is also of medieval origin .

Architectural historian Nikolaus Pevsner considered the tower to be " perplexing " , but described its windows and double internal arch as " odd and very effective details " . Unusually , it is rendered with roughcast in the same way as the body of the church , producing a " heavy " effect . It has three tall lancet windows on the lower stage , and a much smaller lancet above . The three lancets depict the Resurrection , Crucifixion and Ascension of Jesus Christ respectively .

Many of the internal fittings date from the 19th @-@ century renovations . The baptismal font is by far the oldest feature of the church , dating from the late 12th century . Made of local marble , it has an intricately carved stem flanked by four columns topped with delicate leaf @-@ like capitals and roll mouldings , ornamentation uncommon on a Norman @-@ era font . Its form is otherwise typical : a deep square bowl supported by a wide central column and four narrower shafts .

== Memorials and churchyard ==

At the east end of the nave are two large 14th @-@ century stone effigies , survivors of the 17th @-@ century upheaval and all subsequent changes to the church , and now considered to be " high quality " examples of their kind . They are life @-@ size representations of a knight in a full suit of armour and a woman , both lying on their backs in prayer . Most sources identify them as John de Ifelde (Sir John of Ifield) and his wife , Lady Margaret . There is some disagreement over their date of death and the date the effigies were carved , although 1340 is most often cited . The figures may have been carved in London rather than locally . Their heads rest on angels and their feet on lions . Pevsner had great praise for the effigies , noting that they were " far above the usual standard " and had an " inimitable sideways sway " . Such carved effigies are rare in Sussex ? it is more common to find empty plinths or recesses where they once stood ? and there are only three other recorded examples in the county .

Mark Lemon , the founding editor of the satirical magazine Punch , lived in the parish in the mid @-@ 19th century . He owned Vine Cottage on Crawley High Street , which formed the boundary between Ifield parish and the Crawley parish of St John the Baptist . He often worshipped at St John the Baptist 's , which was much closer , but was buried at St Margaret 's in 1870 .

A large table tomb at the west end of the churchyard is listed separately by English Heritage as a Grade II @-@ listed structure . Dating from about 1800 , it contains the remains of George and Mary Hutchinson . The structure is of pale (but heavily weathered) stone , including a two @-@ step plinth , with various inscriptions on the sides , topped with a carved urn decorated with putti . The Grade II listing was given on 23 February 1983 .

There are several other large tombs from the 18th century in the churchyard ? some of which are good examples of the use of artificial Coade stone , popular at the time ? and several brass and stone memorial tablets inside the church from the 16th century onwards . George Hutchinson has a prominent wall memorial in the chancel in addition to his tomb outside ; local sculptor Richard Joanes designed it , and there are Coade stone embellishments . Other carved tablets , such as those to Reverend Lewin and Nicholas Spencer , are by obscure London @-@ based mid @-@ 19th @-@ century sculptor T. Marsh .

= = Parish and church today = =

St Margaret 's was listed at Grade I by English Heritage on 23 February 1983 . It is one of the three Grade I buildings , and 100 listed buildings of all grades , in the Borough of Crawley . Buildings classified as Grade I are considered to be of " exceptional interest " and national importance .

The present @-@ day parish of Ifield covers the west of Crawley and its rural hinterland . The A23 and A2220 roads , between County Oak and the A264 , form the eastern and southern boundaries . Beyond the edge of the Ifield West estate , the boundary extends to Faygate and the farms and rural roads around that hamlet . The northern border is close to the county boundary with Surrey and the southern edge of Gatwick Airport .

St Margaret 's serves as the parish church of Ifield parish , which has four churches ? one in each of the neighbourhoods it covers ? and a church plant venue at Ifield West (part of the Ifield neighbourhood) . A team rector , responsible for the running of all four churches and their pastoral care , is based at St Margaret 's . Bewbush is served by St Mary Magdalene 's Church in the far southwest of the parish . St Alban 's Church , a brick building with a tall bell tower , is in nearby Gossops Green , and Langley Green is served by St Leonard 's Church . All of these churches were built after the Second World War , when the new town was designed .