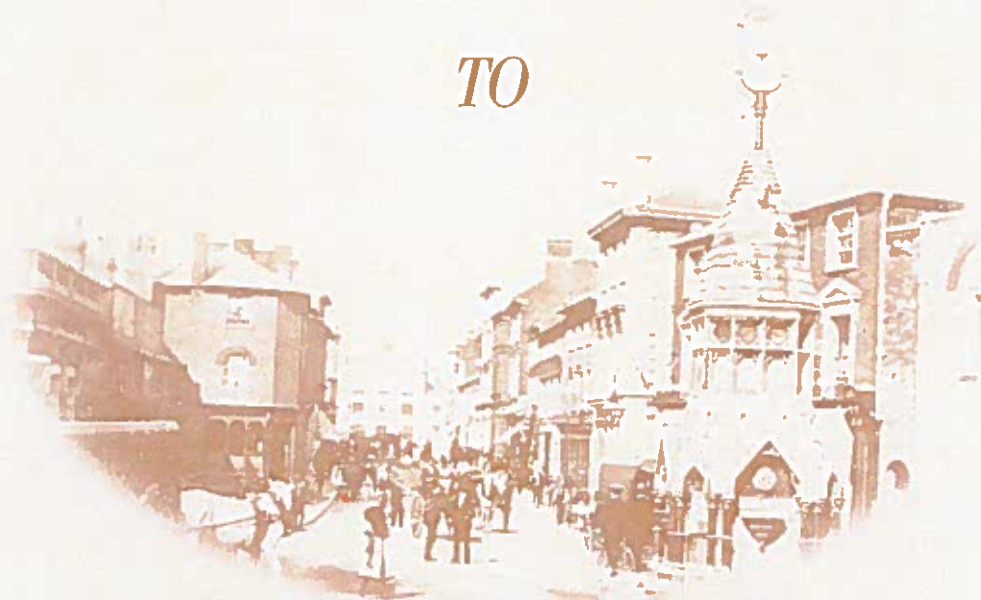


MATE'S ILLUSTRATED GUIDE

TO



LUTON

1907

CHANTRY PRESS

large engineering and kindred undertakings. The co-operation of the two chief land owners has been secured, and during the past six years, the efforts of this committee, of which Alderman G. Warren is Chairman, and the Town Clerk and Mr. T. Keens (Secretary of the Chamber) are hon. Secretaries, have assisted in the introduction of important new firms. Among them are: The Vauxhall Motor and West Hydraulic Co., Limited, in Kimpton Road; the Davis Gas Stove Co., who have built extensive works covering six acres in Dallow Road; the cocoa and chocolate factory of the Co-operative Wholesale Society, Dallow Road; the Motor Works of the Commercial Cars, Limited, Biscot Road; and the British Gelatine Works, Limited, Bedford Road. Messrs. Hayward, Tyler and Co., makers of hydraulic and pumping machinery, who have been established in Luton 35 years, now employ about 600 hands. Here also notable extensions have been made, as well as at the large boiler works of Balmforth and Co., Limited.

Luton Parish Church.

THE people of Luton may be congratulated upon the possession of what no other parish in the county can boast—a church whose recorded history reaches back more than 800 years. It is the only link of an aggressively modern town with the distant past. Its associations with the Washington and Penn families are noted by Baedeker as appealing to American visitors; and for the general tourist it is described

as the most interesting parish church near London. One of the largest churches in England, it is dedicated to St. Mary, and its history is briefly summarised in the beautiful O'Neill memorial window, which depicts King Athelstan (Saxon founder of the church), Robert, Earl of Gloucester (the Norman founder), John de St. Albans (the first Vicar), and Lord Wenlock, who built in 1461 the chapel in which the window is placed. To students of architecture the church is known as one of the finest specimens in the country of thirteenth to fifteenth century work, its prevailing character being Decorated and Perpendicular. The interior of the church is symmetrically perfect, almost cathedral-like in proportions and even more imposing in appearance than the exterior.

Many thousands have been spent on the work of restoration, which was begun in 1865 and carried on almost continuously by Mr. O'Neill during his Vicariate of nearly thirty-five years. The present Vicar (the Rev. E. R. Mason) has continued it. The roofs of the nave and transepts, which are richly moulded, and probably date from the time of Henry VIII., have just been renewed at a cost of £2,500. The tower and steeple, one of the best examples of its class of the fourteenth century, is in urgent need of restoration. Great improvements have been effected since the old days, when the beautiful arches of the chancel and nave were blocked by ugly galleries and the oak screens defaced by paint.

A unique feature of the church is the 14th century Baptistry, which was formerly in the south transept



Photo by A. J. Anderson & Co., Ltd.

Parish Church, from North Side.

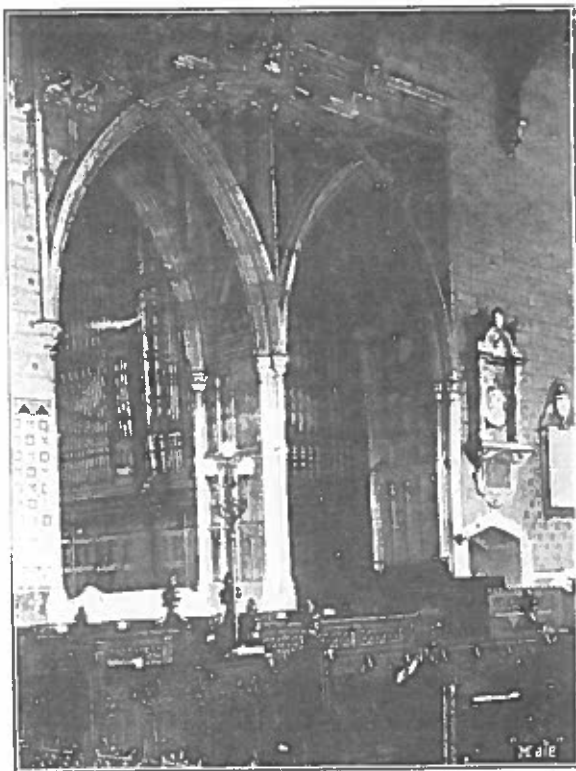


Photo by
A. J. Anderson & Co., Luton **Gothic Stone Screen,**
Showing Pre-by, Wm. Wenlock's Tomb, the Organ
and Console, and the O'Neill Memorial.

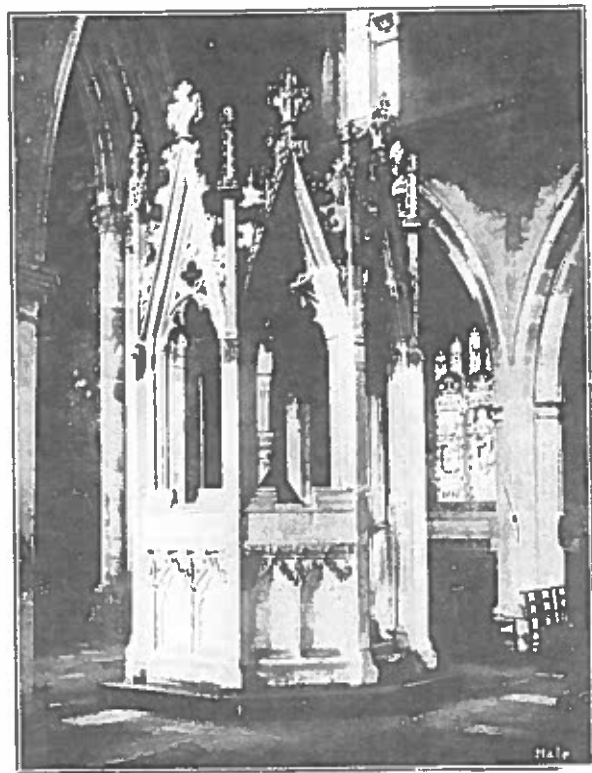


Photo by
A. J. Anderson & Co., Luton **The Baptistry,**
Luton Parish Church.



Photo by A. J. Anderson & Co., Luton.

Parish Church : Interior.

and after the restoration was removed to its original position and placed on a base of Isle of Man black marble. A superb structure of Decorated workmanship, octagonal in shape and twenty feet high, it is of white Tottenhoe stone, richly carved, and has open traceried panels under crocketed gables, divided from each other by buttresses terminating in pinnacles. The lower panels up to a height of five feet are solid, and enclose the thirteenth century Purbeck marble font, round which there is space for eight persons to stand. The font cover is made of old oak from the belfry. The groined roof has a large boss elegantly carved to represent a lamb guarding a vine from the attacks of a dragon. It is said that there are only two other canopies over fountains in England (at Trunch, Norfolk, and St. Peter Mancroft, Norwich), but both these are of wood and different in other respects. The absurdity of the tradition that Queen Anne Boleyn was the donor of the baptistery is clearly shown by the Rev. H. Cobbe, the erudite author of the "History of Luton Church." The chancel was restored about the middle of the fifteenth century by John of Wheat-hamstead, a famous Abbot of St. Albans. On the dissolution of St. Albans Monastery in 1539, the advowson of the vicarage and the rectorial tithes passed into the hands of the King. Thus, after a connection of 384 years, Luton ceased to acknowledge the jurisdiction of the Abbots. But a re-union with St. Albans will shortly be brought about by the new diocesan arrangements.

Many changes were made at the east end forty years ago. A new three-light lancet window was given by

Mr. Crawley, and over it in opaque mosaics are depicted choirs of angels soaring amid fleecy clouds. The reredos is a remarkably successful representation by Salviati in Venetian mosaics of Da Vinci's fresco of "The Last Supper," the masterpiece of the Florentine school, which is now in the refectory of a convent at Milan. The picture is enclosed in an alabaster frame-work with seven arched canopies and crocketed finials between them. The mosaics are practically imperishable, and the figures stand out with striking clearness from the golden groundwork.

The beautiful groined recess on the south side of the chancel, with the rebus of his name, was erected by Richard Barnard, Vicar from 1477 to 1492, as a chantry. Over the four stone sedilia in the sanctuary are eight shields with coats-of-arms. The arms of Abbot Wheat-hamstead (now used as the badge of Luton Secondary School) and of William of Wykeham, the great architect-Bishop, appear twice. The others belong to King Offa of Mercia, King Edward the Confessor, Queen Philippa (wife of Edward III.), and St. Albans Abbey. On the north side are a blind Perpendicular window above the late Decorated Easter sepulchre and the mural tablet, with sculptured medallion portrait by F. W. Pomeroy, erected by the parishioners in memory of Mr. O'Neill. The chancel is separated from the Wenlock chapel by a lofty Gothic double arch or screen, which is considered the finest of its kind in Northern Europe. Coats-of-arms of Lord Wenlock, encircled by the Garter, appear prominently. Beneath the western arch of the screen is a remarkable altar tomb with the

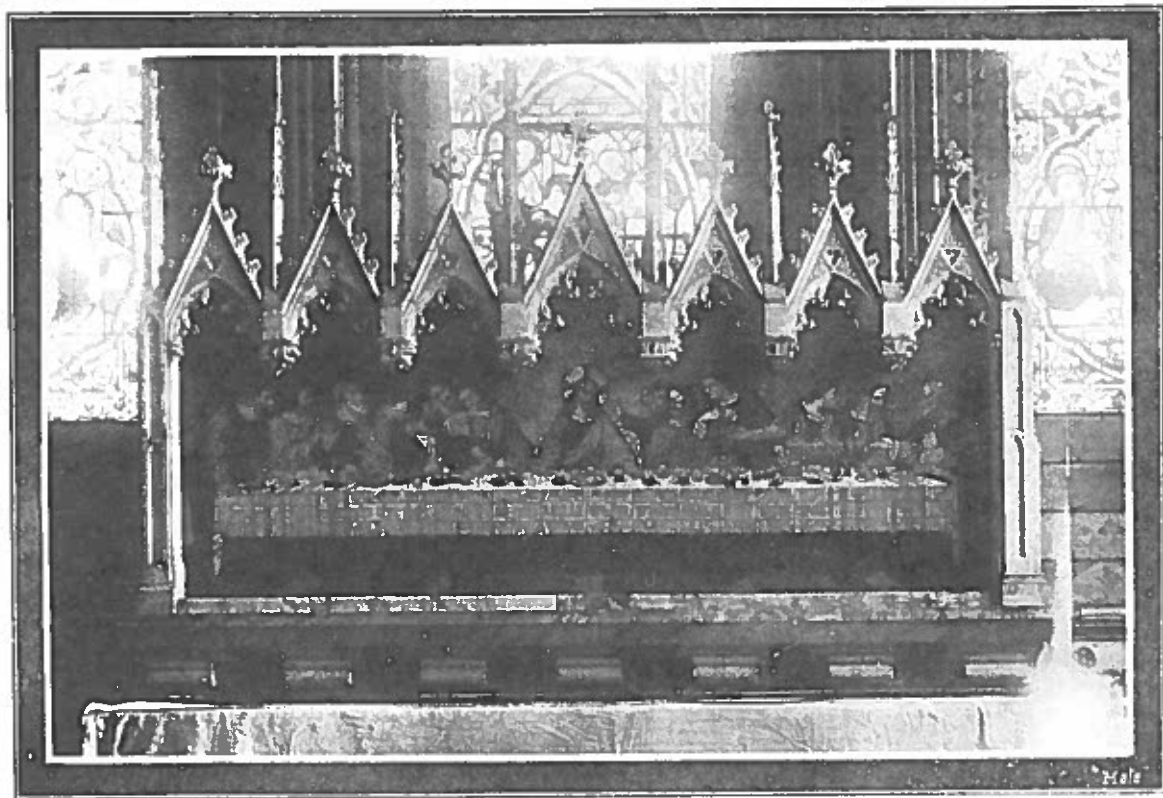


Photo by A. J. Anderson & Co., Luton.

**Reredos, Parish Church :
Da Vinci's "Last Supper."**

effigy of William Wenlock, great-uncle of Lord Wenlock, and Master of Farley Hospital, near Luton, from 1377 to 1392. The inscription is one of the very earliest in English, and perhaps the first combining English and Latin. Beneath the eastern arch is the altar tomb of Lady Rotheram, and on the north side of the chapel are those of her son John, the first of the name who possessed Someries, and George Rotheram, lord of the manor. Here also is the traditional burial-place of Thomas Rotheram, Archbishop of York, 1480-1500, and Lord Chancellor to Edward IV. An oak case displays an early edition of Foxe's Book of Martyrs and an old folio Bible.

The earliest brass remaining is that of "Hugo Atte Spetyll" (Spittalsea) in the Wenlock Chapel and dates from the 15th century. The brasses of John Ackworth (lord of the manor of Biscot and founder of the Trinity Guild), 1512, in the north transept, and of John Sylam (of Bramingham) and Dr. Sheffield, Vicar from 1502 to 1526, in the south transept, are also noteworthy.

The oldest monumental relic in the parish is the stone coffin-lid, which occupies an arched recess in the south aisle. The picturesque sacristy, groined in four bays from a central stone shaft, projects some inches beyond the east end. The explanation is that the eastern half of this building was transplanted when Lord Wenlock required part of the site of the old sacristy in erecting his Chantry Chapel. The upper room, which now contains the blowing apparatus of the organ, was used as a school a century ago.

The richly carved oak screens between the Hoo and Wenlock Chapels and the transepts embody some parts of the old rood-screen. The Transitional arch between the south transept and aisle is the most ancient part of the church. The ring and staple to which Coverdale's Bible was attached in 1536 can be seen in the choir stalls. The organ is a splendid instrument of forty stops, rebuilt by Norman and Beard. Space only permits mention of the handsome marble pulpit, presented to Mr. O'Neill after twenty years' work as Vicar; the ten clerestory windows depicting coats of arms of English sees; the fine peal of eight bells, with the Victoria Memorial clock and chimes, by J.W. Benson, Ltd.; and Fuseli's picture of Noah's offering, now hung under the tower and formerly in Lord Bute's gallery.

The Rev. Edmund Robert Mason, M.A., of Queen's College, Oxford, has been Vicar of Luton since April, 1897, and is also Rural Dean and Surrogate.

OTHER CHURCHES.

CHRIST CHURCH, in Upper George Street, is the centre of the largest parish in the town, and was opened in 1857. What was originally a building of poor architectural merit has been much improved, at a total cost of £5,000, by the addition of a decorated Gothic chancel in 1881, an organ by Nicholson, and a new north aisle, vestry and organ chamber in January, 1904. The nave is ultimately to be rebuilt. The late Vicar (the Rev. E. H. Lowe) built the Parish Room on part of the Vicarage grounds, and in addition to this generous