

## A short walk around the New Churchyard of St Margaret's, Lee

Leaving by the main (north-west) entrance, to the left is the pink granite-topped box tomb of Thomas Brandram (**1777-1855**) who lived at The Cedars, the family home, just visible through the trees on the opposite side of the road. He was a JP and was churchwarden of St Margaret's from 1813 to 1842. In this capacity, he jointly laid the foundation stone of the second known church in the old churchyard. When it came to the building of the present church, he supplied the land at an advantageous price and donated £500 towards the build costs. In appreciation for his services, he was presented with an ornate inkwell in the shape of the church. This was donated back to the church by his great great nephew, Major Richard Brandram, on the occasion of his marriage to Princess Katherine of Greece.

Walking clockwise, next to Brandram is the relatively modest tomb of **John Penn, FRS (1805-1878)** who was a noted president of the Institute of Mechanical Engineers whose family firm in Greenwich employed 2000 workers. His contributions to engineering include the enhancement of the oscillating steam engine, making paddle steamers feasible; and inventing the compact trunk engine, which allowed screw propellers to operate under water. During the Crimean War, Penn organised the chief naval engineering workshops across the nation using standard designs and division of labour to build 97 gunboats in a few months and, by the time of his death, a total in his works alone of 735 vessels.

The next box tomb is that of **Elias Malet (1814-1871)** who lived for many years in Rio de Janeiro, where his three children were born. His son, Alexander, is buried with him.

The attractive box tomb with the vase on top is that of the Rea family. **William Rea (1773-1861)** was responsible for building many of the extant houses on the east side of Lee Park. The tomb also commemorates the wife and son of the Commander Thomas Mudge, RN who was drowned in New Zealand in 1863 when the corvette HMS Orpheus hit a sand bar and sank in Manaulau Bay. Mudge was remembered in 1859 by a former commanding officer, Captain George Richards of HMS Plumper, who had been sent a survey the 49<sup>th</sup> parallel and the islands of Vancouver Sound, where he named Mudge Island.

Just to the other side of the footpath lies **Thomas Postans (1780-1845)** who was churchwarden from 1836 to 1843 and, with Sir Thomas Baring, laid the foundation stone of the present church. From 1793 he lived at Lee Manor where he continued to live after being appointed steward of the officers' mess at St James' Palace during the reign of William IV. It was apparently a common sight to see a convoy of the king's cream ponies arrive in Lee to collect fruit from the Manor gardens.

The box tomb next to Postans marks the burial of **Hon William Cust (1777-1845)** barrister and Commissioner of Customs. He was MP for Lincolnshire and Congleton (briefly both at the same time) and never spoke in the Commons during his six year membership of the House.

At the end of this row of tombs, surmounted by a granite cross, lies **Dr William Carr, MD, FRCS, FLS (1814-1877)** who practised surgery for many years at 13 Montpelier Row in Blackheath. He was Surgeon-in-Ordinary to HRH Prince Arthur, Duke of Connaught, and was commended by Queen Victoria for the "skilful treatment of her son".

Turning the corner, at the east end of the church stands a cross of Celtic design made from limestone from Ballinastoe, County Galway. It commemorates the **Rev Frederick Law (1826-1907)**, Rector from 1873 to 1900 and his first wife (Lady Adelaide Law), whose money paid for the

extension and decoration of the inside of the church. An additional memorial to Lady Adelaide is the Lych gate which opens onto Church Terrace.

Continuing round to just beyond the steps down to the crypt, lies the pink/brown granite tomb of **William Webster (1820-1888)** a prominent building contractor, whose obituary in *The Engineer* reads:

*WILLIAM WEBSTER was born at Wyberton, a small village near Boston, Lincolnshire, in May 1819, and was apprenticed to Mr. Jackson, builder, of Boston.*

*The day after he was out of his apprenticeship (having never worked as a journeyman), he commenced business on his own account at his native village, and carried out works of a somewhat important character, such as building and restoring churches in Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire, and other countries, the erection of sluices, the construction of the Corn Exchange, the reading-rooms, and the oil-mills at Boston, &c.*

*He restored, amongst others,, the beautiful church of Algakirk, near Boston, the architect being the late Sir Gilbert Scott and also assisted in the restoration of the well-known parish church of that town.*

*In 1856-7, he built the Cambridge Lunatic Asylum at Fulbourne, and on its completion entered into a contract for the rection of the Three Countries Asylum, near Hitchin.*

*In 1860 he took up his residence in London, and succeeded in obtaining, among other contracts, those for the formation of the Southern Outfall Sewer, the Crossness, Abbey-mills, and Western pumping stations, together with a considerable portion of the main sewers on the north and south sides of the Thames.*

*He also built a portion of the Victoria Embankment, the whole of the Albert and Chelsea Embankments, the foundations of St. Thomas's Hospital, and the extension of the embankment of the Houses of Parliament. While these were being carried out, he took many other contracts in London and in the country, amongst others, that for the great scheme of the Metropolitan Sewage and Essex reclamation Company and received heavy pecuniary compensation when the works were stopped, the Holborn Viaduct Railway Station and Hotel, the middle level outfall sluice in Norfolk, the waterworks at Hampton, the gasworks at Poplar, the new bridge at Maidstone, &c.*

*Mr. Webster died at his residence, Wyberton House, Lee, on the 1<sup>st</sup> of February, 1858, and was interred at St. Margaret's, Lee, in the presence of a large circle of friends, who attended to testify their respect and to pay a last tribute to his memory.*

*Mr. Webster was elected an Associate of the Institution on the 1<sup>st</sup> of December, 1868.*

Wyberton House, now converted into flats, is on the opposite side of Lee Terrace from the church, just beyond the entrance to St Joseph's Vale and the pair of white captain's houses. The Blackheath Conservatoire of Music was founded by a local group led by William Webster in 1881, and operated out of temporary premises on nearby Bennett Park until the completion of its building by Webster in 1896.

At the west end of the church stands the weathered cross which marks the 61 years year rectorship of George Lock.