ST LEONARD VISITORS BOOK

prepared for St Leonard's Day, November 6th, 2000 and for those wishing to visit the 162 English churches dedicated to St Leonard

THE NORTH (34) - by diocese					
Blackburn	7	Liverpool	1	Southwell	2
Bradford	1	Manchester	1	Wakefield	1
Carlisle	2	Ripon & Leeds	1	York	*10
Chester	1	Sheffield	7		
CENTRAL ENGLAND (81)					
Birmingham	3	Gloucester	*5	Norwich	1
Bristol	4	Hereford	5	Oxford	14
Coventry	6	Leicester	4	Peterborough	7
Derby	4	Lichfield	10	St Edmundsbury	2
Ely	4	Lincoln	5	Worcester	7
THE SOUTH (47)					
Bath & Wells	10	Exeter	4	Southwark	2
Canterbury	3	London	*2	Truro	2
Chelmsford	3	St Albans	6	Winchester	4
Chichester	8	Salisbury	3		

^{*} excluding ruins of earlier St Leonard's churches

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This booklet is for all St Leonard's churches, their incumbents, PCC and other members, and anyone who might wish to visit these churches.

I should be glad to hear more about any of the churches - particularly any details to be added if there is another edition, and anything known about why the church was so dedicated - a prisoner, a safe delivery, a returning crusader, a returning pilgrim? .

My main, invaluable, sources were the Victoria County Histories, Arthur Mee's 'The King's England' series, 'The Buildings of England' series edited by Nikolaus Pevsner, Crockfords, and an AA map - although the distances (as the crow flies) are my optimistic calculations.

Those visiting central France might wish to see the collegial church of St Leonard, on the site of his monastery in St Leonard de Noblat. Nearby La Societe de Connaissance et Sauvegarde de St Leonard flourishes quietly. It was at one of its exhibitions, showing St Leonard's churches in other European countries, that I first planned this booklet. I hope it will be of interest - and arrive in time for St Leonard's Day 2000.

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Jeremy Gould

Addresses:

La Societe de Connaissance et Sauvegarde de St Leonard 14 Place de la Republique, 87400 St Leonard de Noblat, France Tel 00335 5556 5488

Jeremy Gould (for updates)
The Old Bakehouse, Bledington OX7 6XQ
Tel 01608 658503

ST LEONARD ABBOT

St Leonard (AD 485-560) is believed to have been a Frankish nobleman raised at the court of Clovis, King of the Salian Franks, and baptised with 3,000 of Clovis' subjects in 498 by St Remigius, Archbishop of Rheims. But the only evidence for this is tradition - which claims that St Leonard immediately decided to follow a religious life.

In 507 after the battle of Vougle he was given permission by Clovis to release any prisoners he visited including prisoners-of-war, and then offered an archbishopric: he refused and joined a monastic group at Micy (Orleans).

Later, while Clovis was hunting nearby, Clothilde his wife went into labour; St Leonard prayed with him through the night and, following safe delivery (possibly of their daughter, also Clothilde), Clovis offered him as much land as he could ride around in one day on a donkey. St Leonard used the land to establish a monastery at Noblat near Limoges, where he became Abbot.

In old age he retreated to the surrounding forest and lived as a hermit. He died around 560. Patron saint of prisoners, pregnant women, country dwellers and horses, he is usually depicted with prison chains.

ST LEONARD'S WIDER FAME began with Bohemund, heroic crusading son of a Norman Duke. Prince of Antioch after its capture, he quarrelled with the (Eastern Christian) Emperor of Byzantium, and was captured and for three years imprisoned by (Moslem) Seljuk Turks. A pilgrimage to Noblat followed his 1103 release - which he attributed to his prayers to St Leonard.

Noblat soon became a place of pilgrimage for other freed captives including Richard Coeur de Lion, and a stop on the Limoges route (one of four main ways through France) for pilgrims to the shrine of St James the Apostle (Santiago) at Campostela in north-west Spain.

IN ENGLAND St Leonard's fame spread quickly - as Bohemund's story was told to fellow Normans, lords of manors responding to William I's call for a stone church in every parish.

Starting from the south coast at Deal and Hythe and Hastings, over 100 English churches were named after St Leonard, as were St Leonards-on-Sea (Hastings), Chapel St Leonards (on the Lincoln coast), St Leonards (north of Bournemouth, Hampshire), St Leonard (near Aylesbury), Drayton St Leonard (Oxford), Upton St Leonards and Leonard Stanley (both near Gloucester), Burton Leonard (near Boroughbridge, Yorkshire), St Leonard's Street (near Maidstone) and St Leonard's Forest (south of Crawley, Sussex).

Some 20 English monasteries are known to have been dedicated to St Leonard - including one 'daughter house' to the monastery at St Leonard de Noblat at Great Bricett (Suffolk) - as well as over 30 hospitals stretching as far north as Durham and Wigton (Cumbria).

In 13th century Worcester, and perhaps elsewhere, St Leonard's Day on 6th November was a half Holy Day and only essential work was allowed.

HISTORICAL NOTE

CLOVIS (466-511) succeeded his father as king of the Salian Franks in 481. They came from the land of the Sala (Yssl) river in northern Holland near the North (salt) sea - as opposed to the Riparian Franks who lived along the banks of the Rhine. Clovis' grandfather Merovech or Merovius (of Tournai, now in Belgium) had in 451 helped Aetius Roman commander at Arles and Theodoric king of the Goths drive Attila the Hun from north-east France.

By 481 the Goths (originally from Scandinavia) dominated southern Europe: the West or Visigoths ruled Italy, Spain and France south of the Loire: the East or Ostragoths surrounded the Roman Emperor exiled in Byzantium - and were soon to take Italy from their cousins. North-east France still had a Roman overlord, Syagrius, successor to his Roman general father.

In 487 Clovis defeated Syagrius in his capital Soissons, following this up with the capture of Rheims - and later of Paris and the area down to the Loire. In all three towns he left the inhabitants in peace and particularly honoured the resident bishops, the most prominent being Archbishop Remi (St Remigius) in Rheims.

In 491 Clovis secured the submission of the Thuringians and the Riparian Franks. In 493 he married Clothilde (St Clothilde) daughter of one of three Christian brothers who were kings of Burgundy.

Around 498 at her behest Clovis was baptised by Remigius, with 3,000 subjects - presumably including the 13 year old St Leonard. Clovis was well aware that this conversion would gain him the support of the bishops and the Emperor for his further expansion. First he needed to defeat his northeastern neighbours, the Alemans who ruled Alsace.

After several attempts he finally expelled them (to the Alps) in 507. Moving at once to attack his southern neighbours, he met the Visigoth army at Vougle near Poitiers and defeated it utterly, personally slaying king Alaric II: his victory began the expulsion of the Goths from south Europe.

Clovis immediately ordered the release of all clergy, widows and 'serfs of the church' imprisoned by his army. In 508 he met the emperor Anastasius at Tours, where he was created an honorary Roman consul and made large gifts to St Martin's monastery. Later he issued the code of Salic Law. He

died peacefully in 511, succeeded, French style, by his four sons the last of whom outlived St Leonard by one year.

A KEY CHRONICLER of events was St Gregory of Tours, who wrote a history of the Franks while Metropolitan bishop (Archbishop) of Tours 573-594. He does not mention Abbot Leonard but does record his contemporary Abbot Avitus of St Mesmin de Micy, who died in 524 and was presumably the leader of the group joined by St Leonard in 507.

Clovis' order to release those wrongly imprisoned by the Goths (and by his own armies) might well have involved St Leonard. Equally his victory left a large area needing bishops in whom he had confidence - leading to his offer to St Leonard. By 573 there were 11 Metropolitans and 118 suffragan bishops in the Frankish kingdoms.

St Gregory also mentions Bertha (daughter of Clovis' grandson Charibert king of Paris) and her marriage to Ethelbert king of Kent: her firm support of St Augustine in 597 makes Bertha a key link in the conversion of Britain.

ST LEONARD'S LATER YEARS coincided with

* Justinian (Byzantium-based Roman emperor 527-565), who issued the Justinian Code of Law (529), defeated the Vandals in North Africa (533-548) and after a long campaign finally expelled the Goths from Italy

* St Benedict who left Rome around 500 to live as a hermit in Subbiaco and with his followers founded a monastery in Monte Cassino in 529 and issued his Benedictine Rule in 540

* the monk Dionysius Exiguus who at the pope's request revised the Church's Easter tables and established the modern BC-AD calendar

*St Columba who left Ireland in 563 with 12 disciples to settle on Iona

BRITAIN proved less strong than the Franks in resisting Saxon invaders. Later, Norsemen invaded both countries - some settled in northern France: these became the Normans who defeated the Saxon Harold at Hastings, and built (or rebuilt) most of our parish churches.

ARCHITECTURAL NOTE

The entry for each church lists its era: most were built or dedicated in the century following Bohemund's 1103 pilgrimage

For many village churches the pattern of development must have been similar. Saxon and early Norman churches have plainer thicker pillars, and curved, less precise, chancel arches. Later work depends on the fortunes of the lord of the manor, but probably includes some or all of the following.

The chancel and nave are soon expanded - entered by Norman doorways,

south and north, each surrounded by an elaborate tympanum with patterned decoration - and later more imaginative carvings.

The late 12th and 13th centuries bring north and south aisles, with new walls and roofs, and an arcade of pillars where the old wall has been. The new walls have windows, larger than the Norman lancets, with increasingly decorated stonework - and some stained glass.

Early churches were based on Roman temples - a few were continuations of churches built by the Romans in Britain. Sophisticated 17th century Englishmen called medieval architecture 'Gothic', referring to the barbarian successors of Rome (see the previous note).

In 1819 Thomas Rickman invented three categories to describe medieval architecture - Early English (from about 1200) with pointed arches and thinner walls and pillars; Decorated (from about 1300) with a wealth of carving and artwork, window tracery, painted panels and stained glass; and Perpendicular (from about 1350) with 'hanging' vaulting, higher walls and towers, and clerestory (clear-storey) windows.

The Tudors added their square-headed windows and the Stuarts their blackwood triple-decker pulpits: but both saw Cromwells who destroyed the old medieval decoration.

The Stuarts reinvented classical architecture, taking ideas from the Greeks and the Romans in a clear, confident style. Sir Christopher Wren was followed by the Georgians: Portland stone, white interiors, alabaster memorials became popular. Galleries were added for the village band - or, in towns, to help the large congregation see the preacher.

Population explosion and Victorian concern led to a massive increase in church building, church expansion - and church 'restoration' which sometimes brought worse destruction than the Cromwells, but also some brilliant re-creations. Manufacturers of church furnishings flourished.

After the Great War diocesan advisory councils were created to oversee its memorials - and still remain as overseers of all church building plans.

The twentieth century brought great cathedrals in Liverpool and Coventry, real care for the well-being of parish churches, and an increasing interest in Christian art old and new.

ENGLISH CHURCHES OF ST LEONARD IN 2000 AD

1. THE NORTH

Balderstone (Blackburn)

4 miles NW of Blackburn, 7 SW of Whalley

One of seven St Leonard's churches along the Ribble (the boundary until 1540 between York & Lichfield dioceses), running from Whalley (north of Blackburn; once home of Whalley Abbey) to Preston & the sea Church - 1852 Gothic revival, open timber roof, 1906 NW steeple Vicar - Revd David E Ashforth
The Vicarage, Commons Lane, Balderstone, Blackburn BB2 7LL Tel 01254 812232

Downham (Blackburn)

The most inland of the group: 7 miles NW of Whalley & N of Pendle Hill Church - 1809 Gothic (replacing a chapel of St Leonard mentioned in 1296): 15th century tower with horrific gargoyles: Frances Assheton memorial by Westmacott

Note - Downham (Ely) is also dedicated to St Leonard Vicar - vacancy

Langho Billington (Blackburn)

4 miles SW of Whalley

Church: 1880 Early English style: one mile NW is the old St Leonard's chapel: a 1308 charter mentions a hermitage in the rocks east of Billington Vicar - Revd Stephen PC Cooper

St Leonard's Vicarage, Whalley Road, Billington, Clitheroe BB7 9NA Tel 01254 822246

Padiham (Blackburn)

Tel 01772 742367

7 miles NE of Blackburn, 4 SE of Whalley

Church: 1869 Gothic (replacing the 1455 chapel founded by John Marshall, prebendary of York & Southwell): embattled S tower & pinnacles

Vicar - Canon James C Duxbury

The Vicarage, 1 Arbory Drive, Padiham, Burnley BB12 8JS Tel 01282 772442

Lower Penwortham (Blackburn)

12 miles W of Blackburn, 2 W of Preston (& bordering Walton-le-Dale) Church: 1972 (replacing an 1860 corrugated iron mission church) Vicar - Revd Timothy D Wilby (until 23.8.2000) St Leonard's Vicarage, Marshall's Brow, Penwortham, Preston PR1 9HY

Leonard of Noblac

Leonard of Noblac, converted by Saint Remi of France who had baptized Clovis, King of the Franks, had no desire for earthly rewards. He renounced the life of a Frankish nobleman; and when the king offered him a bishopric, he turned it down. Instead he built himself a little hut in a forest near Limoges.

One day the king went hunting in this forest, accompanied by his wife, who was pregnant. The moment of birth arrived, and it was clear that the queen was in difficulties. Leonard fell to prayer on her behalf, and her baby was delivered safely.



In gratitude the king said that the saint should be given as much land as he could ride round in one day on his donkey.

Leonard rode all day, was granted many acres and there founded the abbey of Noblac which he used as a base to preach the Gospel throughout the whole region. King Clovis promised that any prisoner converted by the saint would be released—so that he is today regarded as a patron not only of women in labour but also of prisoners of war.