

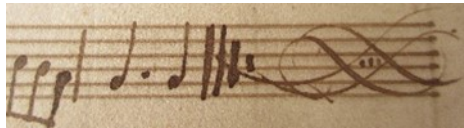
Welcome to

St. Peter's, Church Langton Leicestershire LE16 7SX

Visitor's Guide



The first performance of Handel's *Messiah* in a parish church took place at Church Langton in 1759, previously only performed in theatres.



LOTTERY FUNDED



The Rev^d William Hanbury 1725 - 1778 by Edward Penny RA
Rector of Church Langton 1749 - 1778
Founder of The Hanbury Charitable Trust 1767

St Peter's Church Langton

St Peter's Church dominates the South Leicestershire cluster of the five Langton hamlets. It is the mother church for them all but had two subordinate chapels at Tur Langton and Thorpe Langton. Built at the highest part of the five settlements, St Peter's tall 14th century tower is an imposing landmark. It stands in its churchyard completely encircled by redbrick walls as part of the small Church Langton village.

The church is large and very tall, reflecting the wealth of the parish. It consists of a nave (the main body) with north and south aisles, south porch, west tower, chancel to which is attached on the north a Victorian vestry and organ chamber. It is mainly of ashlar (smooth sawn) white limestone but has some brown ironstone rubble (rough stone) in the aisle walls.

As a priest is mentioned for LANGTONE in Domesday so a church is presumed. Much land in 1086 was held by the archbishop of York and the abbot of Peterborough, and that there are some stones with zigzag mouldings - a Norman late Anglo-Saxon feature - reset in the north wall of the church suggests an earlier building. **(11b)**

The great height of the church body comes from the clerestory above the nave and aisles which has four 3-light upper windows each side. This is perpendicular, early 15th C, as is the bell tower with its clasped buttresses and tall louvered windows. Both clerestory and tower are battlemented. This was a great rebuilding, but some earlier features remain, in the windows, notably in the south aisle (**13** and **A**), in the two canopied recessed tombs and the sedilia and piscina in the chancel. There is a variety of windows in the aisles from the 13th to 15th C's.

In 2017 lead was stolen from the church roof. This was replaced in steel in 2018 with the help of a Heritage Lottery grant.

The church interior

Inside the impression is of a 19th C interior imposed on a soaring mediaeval building. The tall 15th C 4-bay arcade, worthy of East Anglian

great churches, is notable with its slender composite piers of continuous moulding and small semi-round columns with moulded capitals (tops). This, with the very tall chancel and tower arches, tower and clerestory (uppers walls and windows) dates from the 15th C perpendicular rebuilding.

In the mid 1860s in there was a major re-ordering to create a church interior in line with 19th C thinking. The architect was Henry Goddard of Leicester under the Rev^d Thomas Hanbury and the work cost £3199. (A very great sum then.) The walls were scraped of their plaster to leave rough stone exposed, there was a new timber roof, William Hanbury's great organ of 1759 was moved from the tower to the chancel which necessitated building a new organ chamber; this was attached to a new vestry. There were new pews, pulpit, lectern and altar, new altar rails, and new encaustic tiles in the chancel. The mediaeval font - adapted in 1662 with a date - and the pulleyed wooden font cover were reset on 19th C coloured tiles (A). Henry Goddard also designed the gates (8a) to the 14th C porch.

The height of the chancel was raised as were all its windows. They were filled with stained glass in memory of various Hanburys. The chancel screen is 1895.

In 1936 a screen was placed across the tower arch, where once had been the organ. A servery was created in 2012 which has made the church interior more flexible for events, entertaining and providing refreshments.

The Bells

There were already five bells in the tower when William Hanbury became Rector. In 1762 he arranged for three new bells to be cast by Joseph Eayre of St. Neots to augment the existing to make a ring of eight. He ensured they were inscribed with his name, as well as inscriptions in Latin and English. Installed in 1763 they were all rehung in a new iron frame in 1997.

William Hanbury (1725 – 1778) and the Hanbury Legacy

The newly ordained William Hanbury came to Church Langton in 1749. Prior to this his father had purchased for him the advowson (the right to appoint a rector) of Church Langton, one of the richest livings in Leicestershire. Hanburys were rectors until 1899, and much influenced the church and village. When at Oxford, William had developed his deep interest in botany and had enjoyed musical experiences. Once at Church Langton he started tree nurseries and planted trees extensively. He also established nurseries at Tur Langton and Gumley and sent his trees throughout Britain and even overseas. He wrote books on horticulture and arboriculture. He wanted to use the monies he raised from his trees to finance a grand vision.

The grand vision

Hanbury wanted a great collegiate and cultural centre at Church Langton. This was to have a huge church of 9272 m² in area costing £1m, at a time when an unskilled labourer earned only £20 a year. He wanted an altar costing £10K, a clock with a 5454 kg bell and a ring of 8 bells.



William Hanbury 1725 -1778 by Edward Penny RA

He wanted a free library, schools teaching music, science and philosophy, a hospital, housing for academic and music staff, a picture gallery and a printing house for books pamphlets and church tracts. These were never built, but he did organise innovative musical festivals. The first in 1759 had the first production of Handel's Messiah in a parish church; for this he introduced into the church, under the tower, a very fine organ and case. There were three music festivals at Church Langton and others at Leicester and Nottingham, all to raise money for his grand vision as well as to bring Handel's music to the provinces.

Under the floor of York Cathedral are laid three Rows of Bricks one on an other in lifting of 1700,000 the more effectually to keep it dry and prevent the Stones from Decaying &c if such precaution should be found necessary for Church Langton we may suppose 2,000,000 will ~~be~~ be about sufficient for the purpose, which at 1 Pound for 1000 amount to

A Clock and Chimes.	500	0	0
Suppose for Butter &c else.	10000	0	0
also an Alter Piece.	10000	0	0
And the whole amount is.	193807	8	0

Thus may the Church be finished in this plain way, by an Annual Income of 12000 Pound in 16 Years with in 1867.

But let us suppose that one Shilling for cubic foot for the Stone and work on on ship one with another be too little, notwithstanding a considerable share of it, must be large Stones from Leicester Fore Stone &c. that will be able to bear weight, ~~and~~ ^{and} last little more than the carriage, which may amount to about 4 or 6 of foot

Granting such supposition to be truly founded, let there added to make up such deficiency.

64 Stone Masons for 16 Years at 12 and 2 of week each.	25600	0	0
4 Master Masons at 30 Shilling per week.	4500	0	0
64 Labourers at 18 Pence per Day	19200	0	0
	49300	0	0

William Hanbury's calculations for the cost of his great church

Subsequent Hanbury influences

Hanbury's plans for the church were never realised but his son, another William, in the 1780s erected "the most magnificent Rectory in England" (*W.G.Hoskins*): with urns and husk garlands all in stone within the brick pediment. The educational ambitions finally found a more parochial outlet in 1873 in a grand range of village schools and schoolhouses, designed by Henry Goddard of Leicester, which have an interesting but exuberant use of stone amongst the brick. They were skilfully converted to private use by Anthony Goddard in 2004.

Victorian changes

It was under the Rev^d Thomas Hanbury (Rector 1848 – 99) that major changes took place including the 1866 "restoration". (See above under Church Interior). At this time the mausoleum (3) erected c1780 was dismantled.

Laurence Saunders (Lawrence Sanders) c1519 – 8th February 1555 *Sometime Rector of Church Langton*

Laurence came from Welford, some 10 miles from Church Langton, his mother was from the gentry. After an education at Eton and Cambridge and an abortive time in the city of London, he was ordained and began his ministry, feeling strongly for the reformed English Church. He was for a time Rector of Church Langton, but in 1554, in the reign of the Catholic Queen Mary, he accepted a post as preacher in Bread Street, London. His views attracted the ire of Bishop Bonner of London who arrested, interrogated and imprisoned him. In 1555 he was taken to Coventry where he was burnt at the stake for his religious beliefs; he was thus one of the Marian martyrs.

Curiosities at St Peter's, Church Langton

Numbers and letters refer to the plan on page 11.

Outside the Church

1 *Hanbury's stone*

William Hanbury I (Rector 1749 – 78) placed stones around the village to mark the limits of his proposed great church. Examples of these granite stones are under the beech tree, on the side nearest the road, outside the east gateway to the churchyard.

2 *The churchyard gates*

Made in the 1980s these show a cross for the church and the crossed keys which are the symbol of St Peter.

3 *The Hanbury mausoleum*



An octagonal building was constructed to the south of the chancel soon after Hanbury's death in 1778. It was dismantled in the 1860s, the Hanbury remains being transferred to a vault under the new

vestry extension attached to the north of the chancel. Now all that is left are the lower courses of stonework; inside are the graves of later members of the Hanbury family.

4 *Walls and gate to the Rectory*

Sir Nikolaus Pevsner described it as "The most magnificent Rectory in England" (now a private house). It was built in the 1780s by William Hanbury II. A tall brick wall of the same period surrounds the gardens which are adjacent to the south of the churchyard. There is a fine gateway into the Rectory grounds from the churchyard. The leaning wall and gateway collapsed in a storm early in the 21st C but were rebuilt.

5 *Swithland slate tombstones*

Many of the **tombstones** are of ancient Swithland slate (from Charnwood Forest north of Leicester). These date from the 18th Century up to about 1820 and have finely incised letters and details, often of angels. The backs of these slates are rough. There are some good examples to the south-west of the church porch and by the mausoleum.



6 *Monumental altar tomb*

This is enclosed by railings close to the south east of the tower and dates from the mid 19th C. It is to John Prichard and Ann Tailby and their family. It includes four sons, two daughters and eight infant children.

7 *The churchyard walls*

The churchyard is totally enclosed by brick walls. Apart from the walls to the Rectory garden, they date from the 1866 restoration.

On the outside of the church building

8 The porch

8a *The porch gates* are part of the 1866 re-ordering of the church and were designed by the architect, Henry Goddard. Carved into them are the words: ENTER INTO HIS GATES / WITH THANKSGIVING



8b *The south door* is part of the 1866 restoration.

8c *Scratch Sundial* On the left side of the porch arch is a scratch sundial, some graffiti and incisions of unknown origin possibly from the sharpening of knives. Note the stone faces at the springing of the porch arch.

9 *Scratch dial* on the left window jamb of the south aisle window overlooking **No. 6**. A stick placed in the hole casts a shadow; when this coincides with one of the scratch lines that indicated the time of a service.

10 The tower

10a *The church clock*

Its cast-iron blue face is dated 1869 and is by Birch of Leicester. This clock face replaced an octagonal Swithland slate face, probably installed by William Hanbury I, which is now in the grounds of the Old Rectory. He had wanted to have a great bell weighing 5454 kg cast for the clock, but it never was.

10b *The gilded weather vane*

This, on the top of the tower, has the date 1852 cut out of it.



10c *The benchmark*

This is about half a metre up on the south side of the tower's clasped buttress. It was cut in the 19th Century by the Ordnance Survey to provide the exact height at the cross line of the broad arrow. This height is 417.7 feet above sea level (127.4 m).

10d *The west door*

This appears to date from the 1866 re-ordering but note the elaborate ironwork hinges. The doorway is 14th C.

10e *The carved labels stops*

These are at either end of the side doorway's hood mould; that on the right hand is in the form of a griffin.

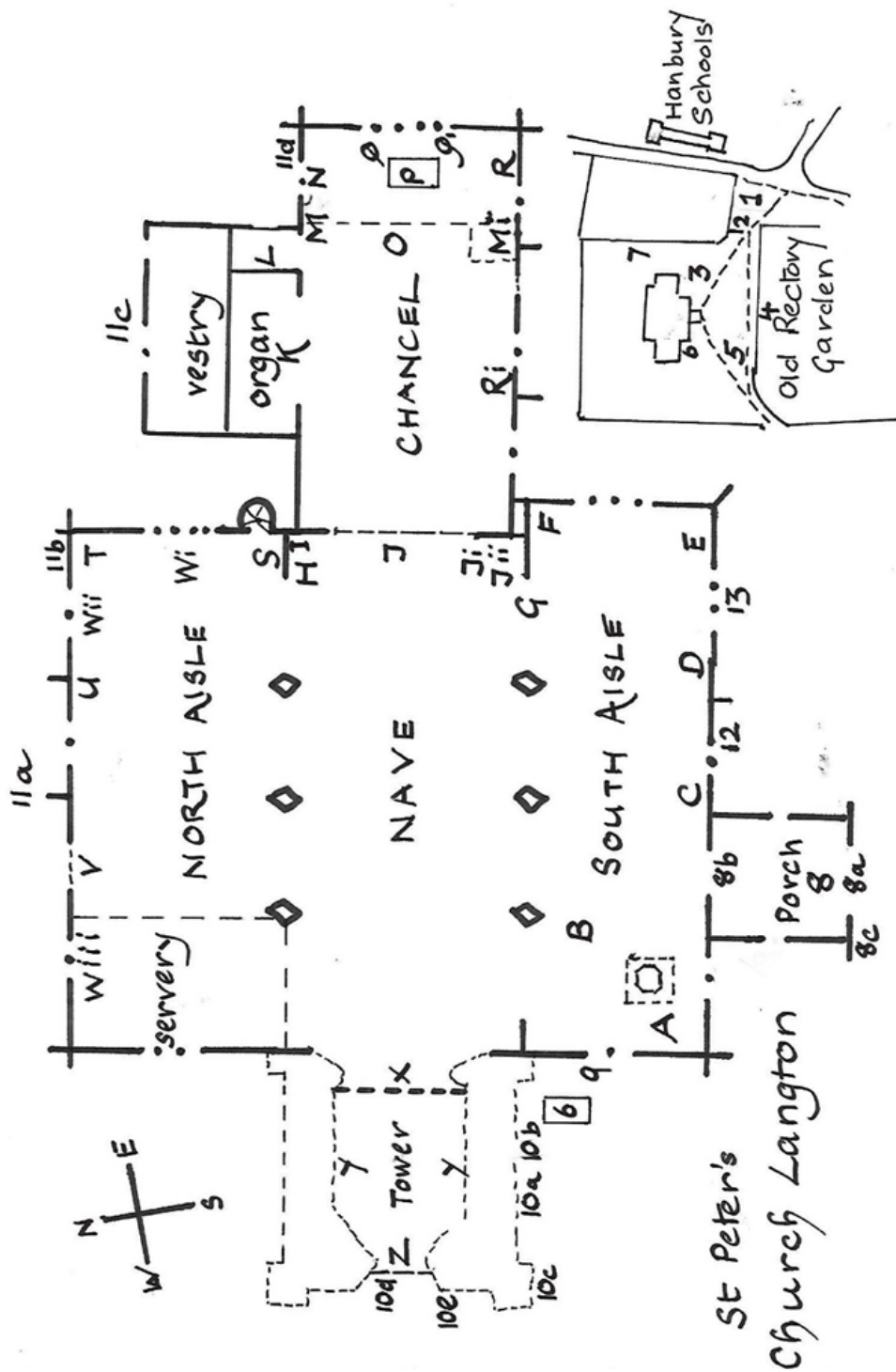


11 North side

11a *Mediaeval stone heads*

There is a course of carved mediaeval heads just below the parapet, on both the north and south sides of the church. Look carefully and try and work out what they are. They include foliate-heads sprouting leaves as well as faces with weird expressions.





St Peter's
Church Langton

11b Zigzag work Halfway up the north wall at its eastern end are some re-set eroded stones with zig-zag decoration. These come perhaps from an earlier church building as such decoration is typical on Romanesque Norman work of the 11th and 12th C.

11c Organ and vestry extension

This extension dates from 1866 and was made to provide a vestry and to accommodate the 1789 organ when it was moved from under the tower arch at the west end of the nave.

11d On the chancel wall externally is an exquisite small arched recess of 13th Century date which was probably a piscina. This could either have been reset in 1866, or is still *in situ*, indicative of a chapel having once been attached at this North East corner.



South side

12 Course of heads



The course of heads from the north side continues on the south side. Note the pair of con-joined heads at the corner. Within this course are large gargoyles in the form of heads having the drainage pipes in their mouths.



13 The window traceries are all different. One window on the south side has beautiful tracery in the flamboyant or decorated 14th C style. The end window of the south aisle, which has the scratch dial (**No. 9**) is in pierced or plate tracery from the 13th C. (**A**)

Inside the church building

South Aisle

A *The font* The font is placed near the door. This is symbolic: one enters the building through the door, one enters the family of Christ through baptism at the font. The font appears to be a mediaeval font similar to others in the area, but it has the date 1662 added to it with the initials TC WC. There is a fine 17th C carved oak font-cover suspended above it on pulleys. The octagonal plinth and the tiled floor are 19th C. The early 13th C window behind the font is an example of plate (pierced) tracery.

B *The alms box* The 17th C alms box, still in use, is near the font. It is encased by the 1866 pews. Note its carved baluster which is inside its pew.

C *List of Rectors on the south wall* This is not wholly accurate, but do note Polydore Vergil (the Tudor historian), Laurence Saunders who was burnt at the stake in February 1555, and the four generations of Hanburys 1749 - 1899.

D *The mediaeval recessed tomb* This is about 1300 and has large foliate crockets on the outside of the triangular canopy. Inside is a mutilated figure in armour of the royalist Richard Roberts, knight, d. 1644, aged 80. He was lord of Thorpe Langton. He is wearing early 17th C dress, note the ruff. His effigy was moved to this earlier tomb sometime in the mid 19th C.

E *Piscina* the recess for washing holy vessels.





F *The manual* (keyboard) of Hanbury's 1759 organ. Note the reversal of the normal black and white notes; this was not unusual in the 18th C. Below is an ancient *bell tree*, a percussion instrument of 25 metal cups on a rod.

G *The lectern* holding a late 19th C Bible. It is in the form of a wooden eagle, also dating from the later 19th C.

H *The pulpit* This is where the preacher speaks. It is reached by steps. This is also from 1866.

I *High Doorway* Above the pulpit, high up, is the doorway which once opened on to a mediaeval preaching gallery or to a *rood screen* (screen supporting a wooden rood or crucifixion scene).

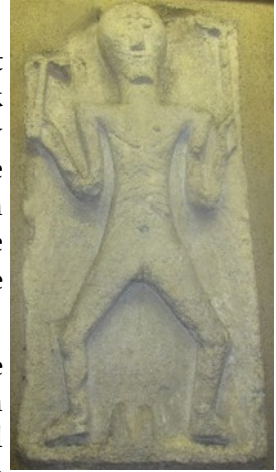
The chancel

J *The chancel screen* This separates the chancel from the nave. It was erected in 1895 in memory of Edward Warner, d. 1894, of West Langton Hall. On the panels below are the signs of the four evangelists in 15th C-style quatrefoils: St. Matthew a winged man, St. Mark a winged lion, St. Luke a winged ox, and St. John an eagle.

Ji To the south of the screen are three tablets to JW Logan and his two sons. JW (Paddy) Logan was an engineer and contractor who built railways. He came to East Langton Grange in 1876, enlarged it and stayed there until he died in 1925. He was MP for Market Harborough and a public benefactor. There are no tablets to his suffragette daughters.

Jii High above these plaques is a stone corbel in the form of a 14thC lady's head. There is another above the door to the gallery stair. (S)

K *The organ* The large 1759 organ, rebuilt 1937–1944, and case by Abraham Adcock from London (a Leicester man), was originally under the tower arch. It was moved to the chancel in 1866 which necessitated having a chamber built out to the north to contain it. The ancient carved stone (L) was found when the foundations for the organ chamber were dug.



L *The Church Langton chappie* This is in the passage leading to the 1866 vestry. It is a mysterious figure. The 'scooping out' around the head parallels 10th C Anglo-Saxon sculpture as found in the Anglo Saxon carvings at Breedon on the Hill. He appears to be holding a hammer and another tool so perhaps is meant to represent St. Dunstan, patron saint of blacksmiths. Although the stone is damaged around the edges it is otherwise 'finished'. As with all medieval sculpture the carving would not have been intended to be 'naked stone' - there would have been fairly elaborate paint and perhaps gilding.

M *Memorial bust to William Hanbury* A marble bust with him holding a scroll inscribed *The explanatory deed of Trust*. It was set on a sandstone slab in the 19th C. The background shows books including a *Bible* and the *Complete Body of Gardening*, one of the books Hanbury wrote. Opposite, on the south wall is a similar sized monument to the Rev^d. John Hanbury, (d. 1899) the son of Thomas, the last Hanbury Rector (1848 - 1899).



N *The aumbry* is a cupboard or closed recess to hold the holy vessels. This one appears to be early 16th C. Note the hand forged hinges.

The sanctuary

This is the holiest part of the church at the east end of the chancel; it is where the main altar is and where the priest celebrates Holy Communion. In the 19th C sanctuaries were often raised, as here, and the altar placed on a platform.

O *The altar rails*

These are from the 1866 restoration.

P *The altar*

Here the altar is a rather plain table, but was intended to be covered with rich cloths. It was originally set up against the east wall.



Q *The reredos* (the decorated wall behind the altar)



Hanbury had wanted an altarpiece costing £10K, but this alabaster one, finished in 1892, is still sumptuous; it shows in relief a version of Leonardo Da Vinci's Last Supper carved by J Reid. On either side, written in alabaster are: left (north) the Ten Commandments and on the right (south) the Creed and the Lord's Prayer. Sadly the lower parts are badly eroded. Two alabaster tablets show wheat (left, north) and vine leaves and grapes (right, south) for the bread and wine of Communion. There are quatrefoils showing a pelican in its piety (south) symbolising resurrection through sacrifice, and (north) the lamb and flag representing Christ the Lamb of God.

Qi *The 19th C east window*

By Heaton, Butler & Bayne showing scenes of Christ's passion is in memory of William Hanbury, Rector 1749–78, founder of the Hanbury Charity. He had wanted a large altarpiece showing the crucifixion for his great church which never was. The other windows in the chancel are to later members of the Hanbury family:

1. Ann Hanbury, 1821 -58, by Hardman;
2. The Revd Thomas Hanbury 1820 - 1899 and
3. his wife Sarah Matilda 1816 - 1884. Note the border of fishes.

R *The piscina and the sedilia* (wall seats for clergy) on the south wall. These all have delicate ogee arches and date from c 1320.

Ri Painted wooden hatchment-style memorial to Anne Brook (1603–1632) born in Zeland (Netherlands) eldest daughter of Sir Calisteene Brook.



The North Aisle

S Near the pulpit is a *piscina* and a *narrow doorway* which led to the stair for the mediaeval preaching gallery across the chancel arch.

T *Ledge* on the east wall. This ledge has a frieze of leaves and two heads, probably of the 14th C and is supported by two large heads. Its function is unclear. The heads on the porch arch are similar.

U *Mediaeval tomb recess* opposite the similar one in the south aisle. These could have been for the Latimer brothers (d. 1282 and 1304), joint holders of the advowson (the right to appoint the Rector).



V *The north door* The door is from the 1860s but the doorway is much older, 14th C; inside it has been rebuilt. The door is opposite the main south door and the font: when a child was baptised the devil was believed to leave it and escape through the north door.

W *The north aisle windows*

Wi The east window showing the heavenly host with the shepherds at Bethlehem is to Jemima Elizabeth Ord (d.1876) who gave the west window under the tower, both by Heaton Butler & Bayne.

Wii The north east window showing the angel and women at the empty tomb is to Thomas Charles Ord 1794 - 1844 and his son Charles Thomas Ord 1832 - 1848.

Wiii In the tracery of the north window over the servery are some fragments of 15th C glass.

The Tower

X *The tower screen* was inserted in 1936.

Y *Rope guides* Above the tower screen within the tower can be seen the old iron rope guides with holes - four each side - to guide the ropes for the ring of eight bells. The bells are now rung from a chamber higher in the tower.

Z The large *west window* showing the Acts of Mercy is in memory of the Revd James Ord (d. 1843 owner of West Langton Hall) his wife and children.



Reredos quatrefoil



The Hanbury Schools,
Church Langton.

These are in Stonton Road, opposite the allotments which were one of the nurseries that Willam Hanbury had for his trees and horticultural work.

Produced by: the Heritage Lottery Fund Activity Group
“Interpreting the Church”

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Printed by Omniprint, Market Harborough