

## THE PARISH CHURCH OF ST THOMAS, MARKET RASEN

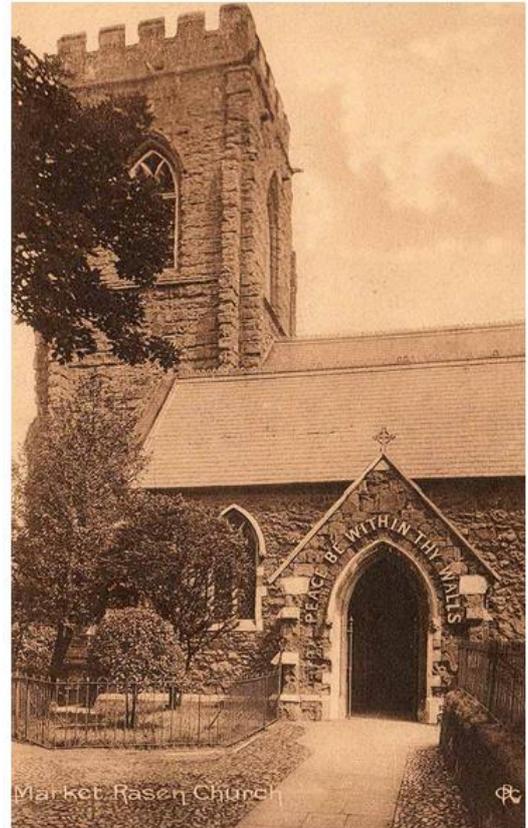
"ALL THE RELIGIOUS IMAGES 'BELONGING TO THE ABOMINABLE MASS' WERE TAKEN FROM THE CHURCH AND BURNT IN THE MARKET PLACE"

**We know there has been a church building on this site for over 800 years, with written evidence dating back to the mid-12th Century. The church was owned by the priory at Sixhills and priests appointed by the priory looked after the spiritual life and needs of the people of Market Rasen until the 16th Century.**

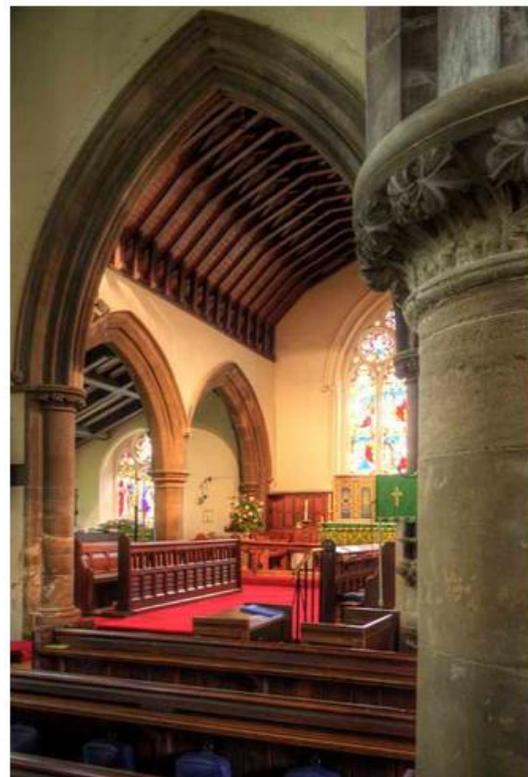
We know that the church building has seen many changes over the centuries. There are 14th Century columns in the north aisle and the tower seems to date from around that time too, which suggests a lot of building work was done in the 1300s. We also know that the church was given financial help in the early 18th Century for rebuilding, and this suggests there had been some sort of major disaster there – perhaps a fire. There was still more building work in the mid-19th Century, completed in 1862 with the addition of the Lady Chapel in 1877. This is the church we see today.

But the most dramatic events the church saw were during the Reformation of the 16th Century when King Henry VIII was on the throne. In 1536 there was a rebellion against the changes that King Henry was making to churches across the country. A group of the rebels who became known as the Lincolnshire Rising camped just outside Market Rasen on the night of 5 October 1536 before moving on to Lincoln to take on the King's forces. They were joined by rebels from Yorkshire and then became known as the Pilgrimage of Grace. But King Henry's troops ruthlessly suppressed and killed the rebels.

In 1563 there was an even more dramatic incident. This was in the reign of the Protestant Queen Elizabeth I when there was a powerful reaction against all things connected with Roman Catholicism, particularly statues and images in churches and



A vintage postcard of St Thomas' Church



Inside St Thomas' Church today

anything connected with the Roman Catholic ritual of the Mass. In Market Rasen this reaction saw the “statues of Mary and John and all the other idolatrous images of the abominable mass” taken from the Parish Church and burnt in the Market Place. While this event would have been welcomed by those who supported the new Protestant religion, there would have been many who had been brought up in the old religious ways who would have been saddened, shocked and frightened.

But there have been some good changes to the church – it now houses eight bells dating from the 1700s and 1800s and these were refurbished in 1999. It meant that the church bells could be rung in full circle for the first time in 50 years, and on New Year’s Eve 1999 the bells of the Parish Church rang in the new millennium.

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## REFERENCES

- Rasen mail 6/3/2008
- Parish records
- Lincolnshire Archives - Terrier dated 1707
- Personal history of St Thomas Church - Mal Jones
- lincstothepast

Find more stories, photos and videos at:

[MarketRasenHeritageTour.co.uk](http://MarketRasenHeritageTour.co.uk)

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