THE HISTORY OF ST. LEONARDS, HEATH AND REACH  
Sometime before 1600 there was built the 'Mancion House, the Chappelle and the Almshouse' at a cost of about £2,000.  
The Manstead Hundred (1912) states 'the tower dates from the end of the l6th Century, and the window of 3 flat pointed lights is probably coeval with the tower. The belfry contains single lights'.  
It is considered that the 'Mancion' House is the house opposite the Church known as Heath House or Heath Manor House from 1600 onwards, and at that time occupied by the Welles family whose monuments are in the Chancel of All Saints Parish Church, Leighton Buzzard, the Parish Church of Leighton Buzzard, which then included all the hamlets and chapelries. The Almshouse site is not known, and of the original Chapel only the tower remains.  
  
1644  
The Chapel remained private property although it is certain it was used by the inhabitants of Heath and Reach for worship, for on the 12th August 1646 the committee for plundered Ministers confirmed an order of the sequestration committee of 10th May 1644 for £30 out of the tithes Leighton Buzzard "for the maintenance of such a godly and orthodox divine as should by the assembly of divines be approved of to officiate the cure of the Chappell of Heath and Reach aforesaid".  
  
1692  
All the property was now owned by Richard Wigg, and the bell which he installed bears the inscription, 'Richard Wigg, Gentman Owner of Me, 1695'. There are also two pewter alms dishes inscribed, 'I do belonge to the Chappelle of Heath and Reach, 1697'. Upon the death of Richard Wigg all the property passed to his daughter, Elizabeth.  
  
1697  
May 31st - First marriage recorded in the Chapel.  
  
The Gift  
It was Elizabeth Wigg, now married to John Frank, who in 1705 surrendered by the rod at the court of the Lord of the Manor 'her little Chappell and cell' as a gift to the inhabitants of the hamlets of Heath and Reach, their heirs and successors, together with the land it stands upon, with access through her close, providing that they kept it in good repair for ever and ever.  
  
1712  
In the Chapel of Heath and Reach is Divine Service and a sermon once every Lord's Day for which the inhabitants of that hamlet contribute to the payment of a Minister.  
  
1716  
A William Hanson was licenced for Heath, Billington and Stanbridge.  
  
1813  
Burial registers commence.  
  
1822  
A Chapel and Chancel 72ft. long by 20ft. wide containing a pulpit, reading desk, one bell and Prayer Book, together with a chest and pulpit cushion, without any rights whatsoever. - Terrier of Chapel of Heath and Reach.  
  
1825  
Heath and Reach was made a separate ecclesiastical district and the Rev. Martin Benson became the first perpetual Curate.  
On the 30th June the Lord Bishop of Lincoln consecrated the Chapel and the Chapel yard as there was no record of an earlier consecration.  
The Rev. Edward Maltby, Prebend of Leighton Buzzard and later Bishop of Durham, 'endowed out of his own proper monies laid out and invested the sum of £50, and the vicar of Leighton Buzzard relinquished to the Curate of the said Chapel the small tithes arising with the Chapelry, that the said Chapelry may be eligible for augmentation by the Governors of Queen Anne's bounty' - Trust Deeds.  
  
1828  
At the Easter Vestry the parishioners decided to enlarge the Church. The parishioners subscribed £223-13-6d and borrowed £300 by exchequer loan to meet the cost. The seating capacity was increased from 140 to 250. The work was undertaken by parishioners as the Churchwardens' accounts testify, and the names are still common in the district.

The Workers:

Mr. Cook - Sandcart with 2 horses

Mr. Franklin - Stonecart with 5 horses

Mr. Brincklow - Sandcart with 3 horses

Mr. Tompkins - Stonecart with 3 horses

Thos. Sayell - 1 load of poles from Leighton Buzzard

Mr. Swinstead -Sandcart with 2 horses 2 carts and 4 horses

Thos. Sayell - 1 load of wood to sawpits

Mrs Stevens -1 day timber cart

Mrs Chamberlain - Brick and stone cart

Mr. Goodman - 2 teams of horses - brick cart

1850  
Elizabeth Knight, widow, gave land for a burial place and glebe, on which the 'old vicarage' was built. The parishioners subscribed £81 to enclose and level the burial ground which is the old churchyard, now closed.  
  
1866  
The parishioners decided to build the apse by voluntary subscription. The Benefice became a Vicarage - London Gazette, July 24th 1866.  
  
1876  
The parishioners built the south porch by voluntary subscription.