

ST. EDMUND'S PARISH CHURCH MAIDS MORETON

WELCOME

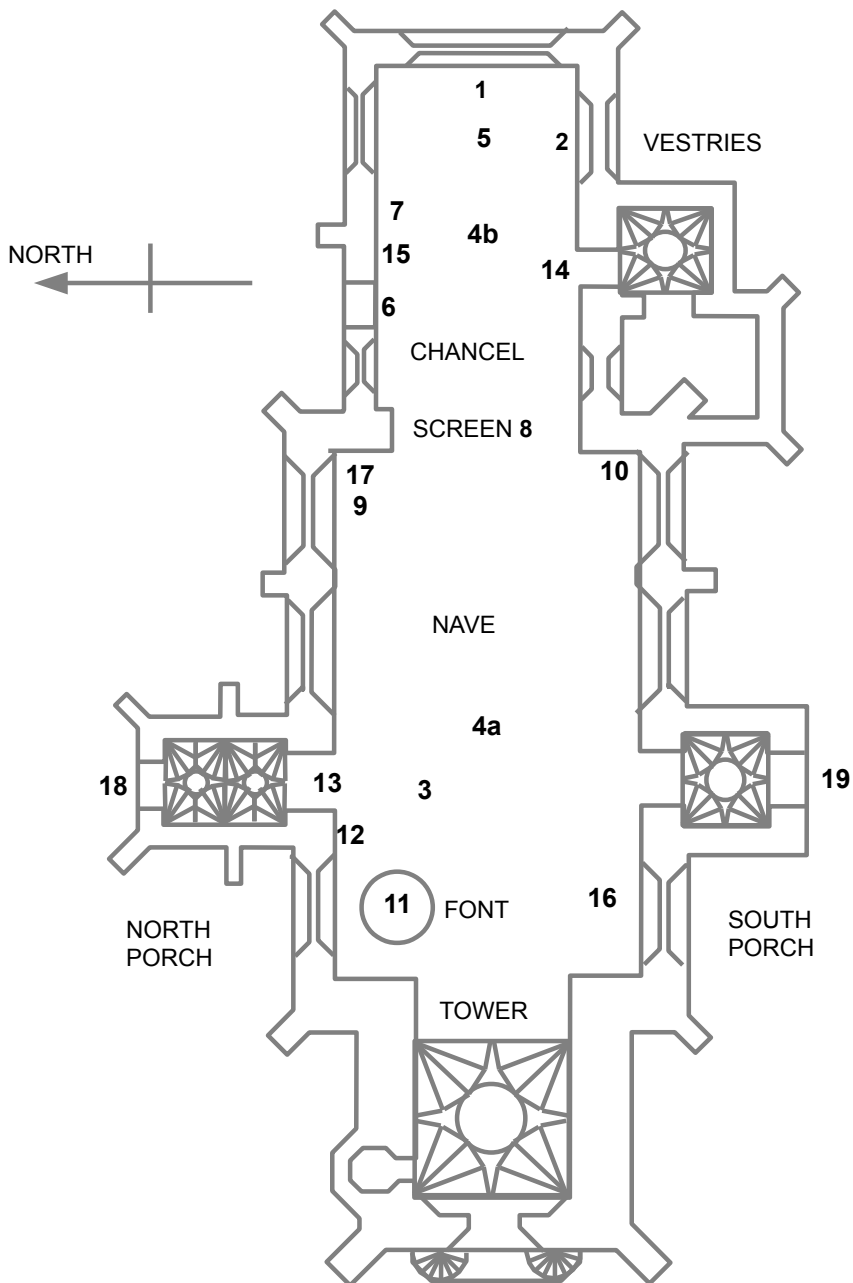
Welcome to St. Edmund's Church. This welcome comes, of course, not from the building but from the Christian community that has made its home here for over 800 years. As you might expect in any home, there are items that have been accumulated over time. Many of these are used in our services every week. In various ways, they relate to us and tell the story of Christian communities over time. They do not show the reasons why we believe in God and Jesus, but they do show the ways in which we believe in God and Jesus.

THE EAST WINDOW (1 on plan - see page 2)

The best place to begin the story of Christianity is with the stained glass in the East window, installed to mark the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria. It shows five major events in the life of Jesus without which it would make no sense to be followers of Jesus. With emotionless faces and sumptuous robes of velvet and silk bordered with pearls and jewels, there is no attempt to show the reality of first century Palestine. Instead, each scene is adapted from high European art with an emphasis on symbols.

The first scene, on the left, shows Jesus lying on straw in a manger; looking on are Mary and Joseph, his parents. Jesus was born in a stable in Bethlehem soon after his parents came there from Mary's home town of Nazareth. The baby Jesus shines with a heavenly light illuminating the faces of his parents; the lamp held by Joseph is pale in comparison. The open building reminds us that Jesus was born in poverty; it also lets us see the star leading the wise men from the East to worship the baby Jesus.

The second scene is the baptism of Jesus in the River Jordan by his cousin John. Jesus' baptism marked the end of his life as a carpenter, and the start of a new life as a travelling teacher telling people the good news about the Kingdom of Heaven. The top left of the picture shows the Holy Spirit coming down from Heaven in the form of a dove: the Spirit transformed Jesus' life and afterwards those of his followers. John wears a camel hair coat and holds his symbols: a scallop shell, still used for baptisms today, and a staff with a short cross.



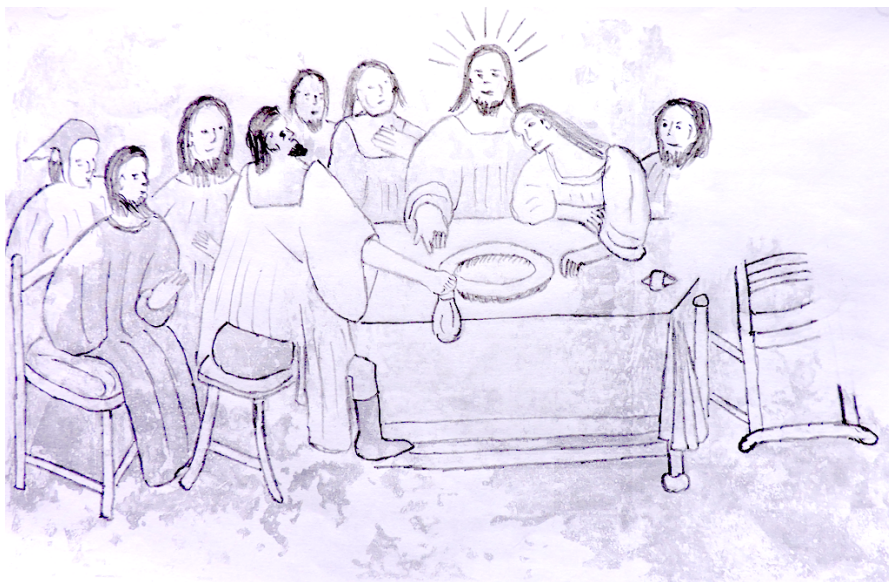
The central scene shows the execution of Jesus by the Romans through crucifixion, the public spectacle of a slow death by torture nailed to a wooden cross. At Jesus' feet are his mother Mary and Mary Magdalen, women who remained to witness his death after all his male followers had fled into hiding. In contrast to the reality of an execution, the artist has chosen to follow the phrase, "He opened his arms for us on the cross", a part of Christian teaching from the very beginning. This is why a crown is shown at the top of the cross and the fingers of Jesus' right hand are shown as blessing us.

The fourth scene shows the first Easter when Jesus, risen from his tomb, stood in front Mary Magdalen, who had mistaken him for a gardener, and greeted her by her name. In the background, sitting on a stone tomb, is one of the angels who were seen at either end of the empty tomb by several of Jesus' followers. In the bottom right of the picture is a vase of perfume with which Mary had intended to complete the ritual of Jesus' burial which had been so rushed on Good Friday.

The final scene shows Jesus being carried up into heaven forty days after he rose from his tomb. The bible tells us that Jesus was with his closest followers and blessed them; he was then taken up into heaven. This scene is often shown with eleven of his followers and Jesus high above them: here there is only room for two of them: Peter and John, and Jesus seems to have just left the ground.

Harder to interpret, because it is has suffered greatly over time, is the painting on the wall below the window to the right. (2 on plan). This shows the Last Supper, the evening meal that Jesus shared with his followers just before he was betrayed and taken away by soldiers to be executed on the next day. This picture is here because this is the part of the church where Holy Communion has been celebrated from the very beginning of the church in Maids Moreton. Holy Communion, also called the Mass, the Eucharist or the Lord's Supper, is a service at which bread and wine are blessed by a priest and shared by the people following the instructions Jesus gave to his disciples at the Last Supper. The sketch on the next page shows what can be reconstructed of the original image: five of the twelve disciples have been totally erased. The picture shows the moment when Jesus tells his disciples that one of them will betray him. The betrayer, Judas Iscariot, is prominent in the foreground. He holds the purse containing the 30 pieces of silver that he received from

the temple authorities. John, the young disciple whom Jesus loved, rests his head sleepily on Jesus' shoulder. The hand gestures of the other disciples show their shock at Jesus' words.



THE CHURCH

The interior of the church, a simple structure with a chancel, nave and tower, has an immediate attraction. The building is of exceptional quality and entirely within the Perpendicular style - a uniquely English variation of Gothic architecture that emphasises verticality, light and proportion. This is seen in St. Edmund's in the large windows with vertical mullions which continue downwards to stone seats. The style developed under Royal patronage in the first half of the 14th century, possibly with influence from Arabic architecture seen during the Crusades. The austerity of the Perpendicular style, so noticeable in the interior of St. Edmund's, was a marked change from the ornate details of the preceding Decorative style.

All the smaller spans in St. Edmund's have fan vaults, a second English development, in which all the ribs have an identical curvature as though the vault was formed, like a cone, by turning

around a vertical line. These developments in architecture were led by Master Masons and were then adopted by Master Carpenters who later applied them to wider spans. Significantly, all the vaults in St. Edmund's are of the early design and construction, similar to the cloisters of Gloucester Cathedral (then a Priory), with the ribs doubling and re-doubling in number as the cone expands.

The architectural features of St Edmund's, when compared with other buildings in the Perpendicular Style whose date is known, suggest that it was completed before 1400. It is certainly the work of an inspired Master Mason which was funded by a very generous benefactor, since the stone work is of the highest quality, even to the very top of the tower. The unusually large number of stone seats, especially in the chancel, suggest that it was intended for a special purpose, possibly a singing school.

The late 12th century font and some 12th century moulded stones, reused in the rear arches of the windows of the North Porch, remain from an earlier building. The list of names of the Rectors begins with Robert, in 1241.

The church is composed of the original chancel, nave, tower, north and south porches and a south vestry. The latter was extended in 1882. The structure of the church is of limestone rubble, with shallow roofs. A major, but sympathetic, restoration was undertaken between 1882 and 1887.

St. Edmund's is dedicated to the Anglo-Saxon King Edmund who lived in the 9th century and who met his death in Essex, at the hands of the Danes. The chronicler, Roger of Wendover wrote that this soldier-king refused to forsake Christ when brought before his foe, Hinguar. "This goaded his tormentors to fury. They made him a target for their archery... The body of the dauntless king bristled with javelins and arrows like a hedgehog..." Edmund still refused to forsake Christ, so Hinguar ordered his beheading. His head was then thrown into a thicket of brambles where, months later, his followers discovered it guarded in the forearms of a huge wolf of terrific appearance. The head and body could then be buried together, eventually in the abbey of Bury St. Edmunds, in Suffolk. King Edmund was reputed to have had miraculous powers and so was recognised as a saint. Striking evidence of this is provided by some

2,000 coins which have survived from the period. These are known as St. Edmund Memorial Coinage and were struck in the name of the saint, rather than in the name of the king. St. Edmund's day is November 20th.

THE MAIDS OF MORETON (3)

A stone slab, originally in the centre of the nave and now under a liftable section of the floor, carries the outline of the brasses for two ladies with a hairstyle dating it to between 1380 and 1420. By tradition, recorded as early as 1644 in the Civil War diary of the antiquarian Richard Symonds, the church is said to have been built by two pious maiden ladies of the Peyvre family. New brasses were inserted in 1890. The tablet, under the feet of the figures, bears the inscription: - 'In pious Memory of two Maids, daughters of Thomas Pever, Patron of this Benefice. These figures are placed in the ancient Matrix by M.T. Andrewes, Lady of the Manor, in 1890. Tradition tells that they built this church and died about 1480'.

Research in 2016 has found documents recording that two sisters, Alice and Edith de Morton, held part of a manor in Moreton from 1393 to 1421. It is much more probable that they were the true maids of Maids Moreton and that the stone slab was theirs. If this is the case the two shields with Peyvre arms on the slab are later forgeries. Moreover, Thomas Peyvre's only daughter, Mary, predeceased him. She had married John Broughton, it was their son, also John, who inherited both the Peyvre and the Broughton estates. Thomas Peyvre (1344 - 1429) may well have paid for the rebuilding of the church, he acted as a banker, and would have had the quarter of a ton of silver pennies needed to pay for the work.

THE WINDOWS

The windows throughout the church, with their tracery of vertical mullions and horizontal transoms, are the most obvious feature in the Perpendicular style. We do not now see them as they were planned, since the purpose of the tracery was to hold the glass. At the top of the East window are assorted pieces of medieval glass. If the portions showing foliage are in their original places they would indicate that the window showed the Tree of Jesse, the father of David. This is a pictorial representation of the prophecy in Isaiah that Jesus will be a descendent of Jesse: "A shoot will come up from

the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit." This was a popular subject in the 14th century.

The concave window reveals are a special feature which indicate high quality but austere work, since single carved stones span the thickness of the wall. Such concave reveals can be seen in the chapel of New College, Oxford (after 1379), the chancel at Adderbury (1409 - 19) and the Divinity School in Oxford (after 1427), but are highly unusual in a parish church because they require large stones that would have been very expensive to carve and transport.

A unique feature of the East window is that it has a three-centred arch which is flat at the top rather than pointed in the Gothic tradition. Very similar arches can be seen in Gloucester Cathedral where round Norman arches were updated in the 14th century by reducing their width and adding short sections of greater curvature at each side.

The larger North and South windows in the chancel have extended vertical lights, while those in the nave are divided by horizontal transoms. This is consistent with a change in theological emphasis from the miracles of saints, typically depicted as a series of scenes running vertically, to the communion of saints, depicted by individual saints in separate panels. A few of these saints, together with some canopies, can be seen in the upper part of the West window, to which they were moved in the 1880's restoration. If the windows reflect a change in theology, it would be consistent with the chancel being constructed before one of the 14th century recurrences of the Black Death, while the nave and tower were built after it. At the top of both windows on the north side of the chancel are medieval glass panels which are probably in their original positions although the stonework of the smaller window is a replacement, probably of the 1880s.

THE ROOF

The original oak roofs of the nave and chancel remain. The chancel roof is of two bays, the carved boss at the centre of the tie-beam shows Jesus in Majesty sitting on a throne holding the world in his left hand while his right hand is raised in blessing. The nave roof has four bays, with carved bosses at the intersections of the main

timbers. Under the tie-beam of the central truss is a boss carved with a figure of Jesus in Judgement sitting on a rainbow, his two hands are raised to display his wounds which can also be seen in his side and on his feet. These figures are worth a close look, they demonstrate the medieval emphasis on the suffering of Jesus for the sins of all people in the world, and the blessing that can be received through the participation in the mass which was celebrated daily in the church.

The wall posts are supported by carved corbels of stone and wood. The whole roof was renovated in 1882 and overlaid with new timbers and re-roofed.



The two figures of Christ on the roof bosses: *left, in the nave, (4a)* Christ seated on a rainbow displays the wounds from his crucifixion; *right, in the chancel, (4b)* Christ on a throne holds the world in his left hand while his right hand blesses it.

THE SEDILIA (2)

In the south-east of the chancel there is an elaborately carved canopy over the Sedilia (seats) which were for the use of the priest, deacon and sub-deacon who served at the mass. It is all of chalk, and probably dates from the late 15th century. It has been suggested that it came from another building and been inserted at a later date, but it would be difficult to move without damage and it does fit the space.

We cannot be certain when the painting behind was first executed, however the subject, the Institution of Holy Communion, is more typically post Reformation and therefore from the later part of the 16th or the early 17th centuries. The painting has literally been defaced, probably by Cromwell's soldiers.

THE COMMUNION TABLE (5)

The communion table is at the centre of our weekly service of Holy Communion. Bread and wine are placed on the table before being blessed by the priest and shared among the people present. Before the Reformation a stone altar, probably containing relics of St. Edmund, would have been here and used for the Mass. Its replacement by a wooden table reflected a change in theology from the Mass being a repetition of the sacrifice of Christ on the Cross to Communion being a service in which Christ's commandment to "do this in remembrance of me" was obeyed.

The Jacobean table of carved oak bears the date 1623 and must replace an earlier table. The carvings include dragons with grape vines emerging from their mouths, symbols of the Holy Spirit and the fruit it bears, a rose and a thistle indicating the united crowns of England and Scotland, various faces and shields with the name 'John More', presumably the donor, and the More family arms.

THE NORTH CHANCEL DOOR (6)

This door is an enigma, it is made of wide vertical planks, mostly elm, and has every appearance of a hastily made stop-gap that has never been replaced. It almost certainly has an interesting history to tell if it were known; for example, it is possible that it replaced the door that Cromwell's soldiers broke through during the civil war.

THE LECTERN (7)

The lectern has an oak base and support, carrying an oak carving of an eagle with spread wings, a traditional form reminding us that the word of God has been brought down from Heaven. It was donated by Eliza Nickols of Oxford, in 1933, in memory of her mother, who was born in Maids Moreton.

THE CHANCEL SCREEN (8)

The oak chancel screen was examined in 2012 by the consultant conservationist Hugh Harrison. He found convincing evidence that

the screen was no later than the 15th century, and that it had always been in its location. He wrote "that the screen is one of the most complete, least altered or damaged medieval screens that I have ever seen". He found signs of the original red and green polychrome decoration. The screen has a number of "spy-holes" cut into it so that the congregation, kneeling as close to the altar as they were allowed, could see the celebration of the mass and, in particular, the wafer of bread, standing for the body of Christ, which the priest lifted above his head at the climax of the service.

On top of the screen, at either end of the chancel arch, are placed two very black oak figures with shields displaying the hammer and nails that held Jesus on the cross. The figures formerly belonged to Lady Kinloss (great-granddaughter of the third Duke of Buckingham and Chandos) and were presented to the church by her in the belief that they originally belonged to it. They may have been corbel fronts, or bosses from an old roof.

THE PULPIT (9)

The pulpit has carved oak rails in the Gothic style. It was presented by Dr. Edmund Harold Browne, Bishop of Winchester, as a memorial to his parents, Robert and Sarah Dorothy Browne, who are buried under the tower. The handrail to the steps was added in 1934.

THE CHAPEL (10)

The presence of the remains of a Piscina - a wall drain for communion water - in the south east corner of the nave, indicates that an altar was originally here. It is not known whether this side chapel was dedicated to St. Mary or St. John, but probably St. Mary, as the Lady Chapel is usually to the right side of the church. A niche in the corner could have been for a figure of either of the saints. The peculiar squint, or hagiastroscope, allowed a view of the High Altar, so that the two celebrations could reach their climax at the same time.

THE FONT (11)

The font is a relic of the former church. It is of late Norman character, and has a large circular bowl (twenty six inches broad, and thirteen and a half inches high) resting on a massive octagonal base and stem. The bowl is decorated with a series of six ornamented and beaded semi-circles, each enclosing a large acanthus leaf, with smaller leaves in the intermediate spaces. The

font bowl is believed to be a product of the workshop from St Peter's, Northampton, active in the 1140's and 1150's. Other fonts by these sculptors are found at Green's Norton, Paulerspury, Dodford, Harpole, Weedon Lois, and Tiffield.

The stem is not earlier than the present church, and the foot is comparatively recent. It has an oak cover with wrought iron brackets and a central ring for lifting. The damage to the stone bowl, caused during the Reformation, is still clearly visible. Before the Reformation the font was locked to secure the 'holy water' for baptisms. The locks were forcefully removed during the Reformation and the stone, as a result, cracked.

THE BREAD BASKET AND CHARITIES (12)

The early Victorian bread basket hangs on the wall near the North Door. It has no use now but originally it was used to hold the bread which was distributed to the poor of the parish, after evensong in winter. The bread was paid for by the interest on a bequest in the will of John Snart, who died in 1743. Very early photographs of the church show the bread basket in its present location, but photographs taken at the turn of the century show that it had been removed. Apparently, the Rector, Mr. Clay, found it in the attic of the Rectory, in about 1904, and the Sexton, Mr. Daniels, identified it and had it restored to its original place. Perhaps all this was an early example of the 'Health & Safety' ethos which dominates our lives today because in its original position it was not difficult to bump one's head on the basket when rising to sing a hymn! The present records of the church charities show that in 1947, 209 quartern (4oz or 113gms) loaves were distributed, costing 9d (under 4p) each. The number of quartern loaves decreased over the years, and the price increased. They were last distributed in 1970, when 21 quartern loaves, cost 3/6d (17½p) each, were distributed. Smaller loaves were last given away in 1976, but after that, vouchers were given to purchase groceries from the local shop, which alas no longer exists. Five Charities remain in Maids Moreton and provide money for those meeting certain criteria (which are published in the parish magazine each November). The Rector is one of the Trustees and funds are given out in early December in the Village Hall.

THE MEMORIALS

Above the North Door is a 17th century painted inscription with the arms of the Peyvre family, commemorating the founding of the church, in the following terms: "Sisters and Maids, daughters of the Lord Peovre the Pious and Munificent founders of this Church". (13) On the South Wall of the chancel, over the vestry doorway, is a tablet with an inscription, which is now very faint, that reads: "Underneath lyeth the body of Frances, Daughter of Thomas Attenbury, servant to King Charles the Second, and to his present majesty King James: and Alderman of the Corporation of Buckingham. She died the 25th day of June 1685, and in the 7th year of her age." (14)

Opposite, within the recess in the centre of the north wall of the chancel, is an elaborate monument to Penelope Bate and her husband Edward Bate, the son of George Bate, who was physician to Charles I, Cromwell and Charles II, and the grandson of the rector Matthew Bate, who began the Registers. (15) She is also remembered on a large stone slab, which was on the floor of the chancel, and is now in the south west corner of the nave. (16) On the wall behind the pulpit there is an 18th century tablet to Penelope Verney, granddaughter of Edward Bate and wife of Lord Wiloughby-de-Brook. (17) In her memory is inscribed:

"Under this stone doth lye
As much virtue as could dye
Which when alive did vigour give
To as much beauty as could live".

In the same vault, beneath the tablet, is the body of "Collonel James Pendelbury, Col. of the Royal Train Artillery, and Master Gunner of England to the day of his decease, and Sub-governor of the Tower of London during the latter end of Queen Anne's reign. He was in all the battles of the late wars, and there served faithfully, valleantly and dillegently. He departed this life the 10th of November 1731 aged 72. He married in 1719, Penelope Packe, widow, who survived him and erected this monument".

THE GALLERY

The Bellringers' gallery was built as a memorial to those who died in the Second World War. On the south wall of the gallery hangs the old South Door, in which can be seen the musket-ball holes made by the Roundhead troops in 1642.

In 2015 the church was reordered with a level oak floor and a kitchen and toilet were added under the ringer's gallery. At the same time the chancel was cleared of furnishings accumulated over time and returned to a use as a quieter and more sacred space.

THE BUILDING OF THE CHURCH

Although the precise date of construction is uncertain, the sequence of rebuilding can be established from external features. The first part to be rebuilt was the chancel beginning at the junction with the nave. The evidence is provided by the prominent stones forming the lower string course: these are cut at 45° at the corner of the chancel wall and the east wall of the nave. Elsewhere a single corner stone is carved with the turn in the wall. The stones in the wall over the north chancel door and small window show an unusual feature: they decrease in size (and therefore weight) with the height of the course, which is normal, but, beginning about 1 m from the top, there are four courses of much larger stones. This section of the wall has two string courses; the upper one running below the window and above the door, there is a string course below the windows of the eastern bay of the chancel, it is higher on the north and south walls and lower on the east wall in keeping with their heights. The nave, with even larger windows, has only the bottom string course, which is continuous round the porches and the tower.

The most consistent explanation for all these features is that the rebuilding of the chancel began from the east end of the nave with a plan for small windows and a tiled roof but, before the eastern bay was built, a change was made to bigger windows which required a shallower roof. The top of wall of the western bay therefore had to be raised. The rebuilding was extended to the nave and tower with even larger windows. The uniform profile of the concave window reveals suggests that the entire construction was in the hands of a single master mason.

NORTH PORCH AND DOORS (18)

In the outer entrance of the North Porch is an early 17th century double door, set in a frame with a balustered fanlight in the head, bearing the date 1637 and a shield with the arms of Pever. The Porch has embattled parapets, winged figures possibly representing cherubim, and a handsome fan-vaulted ceiling. The design and

execution of the vault is almost identical to the cloister of Gloucester Cathedral. In the rear arches of the windows are some 12th century moulded stones, probably re-used from the original church. There are stone benches on each side, marked with horseshoes, and chiselled, so tradition states, as for a game. Cromwell's soldiers are said to have stabled their horses here.

Both doors and stonework inside have graffiti inscribed dating back to the early 17th century. The doorway into the nave holds the original oak door, dating from when the church was built. This carved door includes the original lock and key, though the bolts and washers are more recent. The key, still in daily use, is of iron, wrought by a blacksmith five centuries ago, all its corners now polished smooth. In recent times a duplicate key was kindly made and donated to the church by the owner of the forge in Main Street. This duplicate is remarkable in that it is not only difficult to distinguish it from the original in terms of its appearance, but also the two keys are almost identical in weight!

SOUTH PORCH AND DOORS (19)

The porch is smaller and less elaborate than that on the north side, being without buttresses and having a plain parapet in place of battlements. The roof is fan-vaulted, of the same character as the vestry.

The internal door is of much later date, and was installed during the restoration work of the 1880's. An old photograph of the church dated 1885, before the restoration work, shows the South door was not in use. The porch was underpinned in 1982 and the fan vaulting was reset. Beneath the porch now lies a sealed scroll bearing the names of those who subscribed to the cost of the project which also included stonework repairs all around the church. Both the North and South doorways are set within recessed arches, carried up to the same height as the windows.

THE TOWER FROM THE OUTSIDE

The West Doorway, which is considered to be unique, has an elaborate canopy, supported by two richly panelled cones of fan vaulting. The cornice of the canopy is enriched with flowers, and crowned by an embattled parapet. Immediately above is the West Window, with the remains of the 15th Century glass. The tower is

unique for the divided long recesses which include the louvres for the bells. Above these are arches with very finely worked crockets. At the top corners of the tower are winged figures identical to those on the North Porch; the moulded and pierced battlements are original. In the early 21st Century the roof of the tower was renewed; parts of the old roofing, covered in 17th century graffiti, are kept in the belfry.

THE BELLS

There is a ring of six bells, which are regularly rung. The tenor weighs 556 kg. Originally there were only two, then a third was added, and all were recast into five bells in 1717 by Henry Bagley. They "Wrang Ye 22nd June 1717". Alfred Bowell of Ipswich re-hung them in 1906, and George Ward donated a sixth bell. He generously paid for the re-hanging, and for the new bell frame, at a cost of £200. A Benediction Service was held on 4th December 1906. The inscriptions on the bells at this time recorded mainly the names of the rector and churchwarden, but the fifth bell was inscribed: "Alfred Bowell made me, George Ward gave me, And restored us all in 1906"

In 1950, they were again re-cast and re-hung, this time by Taylor's of Loughborough at a cost of £800. They reproduced the exact markings of the old bells on the new ones. The treble and second bells are dedicated to St. Edmund and St. Mary. The third is dedicated to Herbert Jones, Captain of the Ringers for over half a century and the fourth is in memory of Sidney and Emma Daniels.

The Service of Dedication of the Bells was held on the occasion of the church's 500th Birthday. New gates were dedicated at the same time, also the Processional Cross, and the flags of the Mothers' Union, Guides and the Scouts. On a plaque in the ringers' gallery are the words "In thanksgiving to Almighty God for the safe return of so many of the Parishioners, and the preservation of the Parish of Maids Moreton from enemy bombing in World War II, 1939-45, these six bells were re-cast in the year of Our Lord 1950".

THE REGISTERS

The registers date from 1558. The first volume bears at the commencement the title, "The Old Register of Mayde-Moreton, ffaythfully transcribed by Matt. Bate, Rector". Matthew Bate

succeeded his father, George Bate, as rector in 1643 and copied the original register right up until his own time.

An interesting entry under the year 1642 describes the damage done to the church by "ye souldiers at ye command of one called Colonell Purefoy of Warwickshire", when the stained glass windows were broken. He goes on to explain "we conveighed away what we could, and among other things, ye Register was hid, and for that cause is not absolutely perfect for diver's yeares, though I have used my best diligence to record as many particulars as I could come by".

It is also recorded that in 1653 was issued a Memorandum "That this year came in force an act of Usurper Cromwell, that children aught not to be Baptised, and Marriages be by Justices of Peace. But it is here observed that not one in the parish complied with it, but Christened the children in the Church, and no persons bedded, before they were solemnly wedded in Church".

WORSHIP TODAY AT SAINT EDMUND'S

You are warmly invited to attend our services which are held every Sunday at 10.30 am. That on the first Sunday of the month is all age worship and is attended by our various youth groups, those on the second and fourth Sundays are Holy Communion, while that on the third Sunday is a service of the Word led by a member of the congregation.

Details of other services and our activities for younger people are to be found on the noticeboard in the churchyard.