

## The Devil's Door



If you wander around to the north side of the church, just past the door to the bell tower, you may notice a blocked-up, small, arch-shaped door – The Devil's Door.

According to Wikipedia, 'before and during the Middle Ages the north face of a church was considered to belong to the Devil and to people considered heathen. Churches were invariably built to the north of roads and tracks, to ensure their main entrance was on the south side. It was also common for them to be built on pre-Christian sites.' St Michael's, built on a hillside, with several yew trees in the grounds, may well have been a site of worship for Druids. One theory is that the door was to allow the Devil to escape from the church. It was thought that the Devil lived in an unbaptised child. At baptism the Devil would be driven out and could leave by the door. The font at St Michael's is indeed close to the site of the door. There are many examples of Devil's door in the British Isles, and most are bricked up. It was suggested that Pope Innocent III in the 13th century ordered the north doors to be blocked off because he decided the practice of leaving them open was mere superstition. However, many of these doors were probably blocked in the 16th century. Another suggestion is that this was done to stop the draughts from the chilly north winds. Was the door to let the devil in or to let the devil out and was it blocked to keep out the devil or the wind? Who knows?

**Brent Knoll News December 2021**