



The Church in the 19th Century

The Church of Shotesham St Mary

The Church its history and Architecture

Once described as the lonely 16th century church across the fields it was built in the late decorated style and consists of chancel, nave, south porch and a perpendicular west tower of knapped flint with brick bell openings.

The doorway to the nave dates from about 1200 and the chancel is late 13th century it has an east window with some rather unusual tracery of that period in the south nave window with three stepped lancet lights under one arch. The nave is partly of brick in its upper parts. There is a perpendicular north chapel with doorway to the north.

This was built by Bartholomew White a lawyer in 1486. He died in 1495 and is buried in the chapel with his two wives.

There is a single braced nave roof, and arch braced chancel roof. The chancel piscina is surrounded by a number of decorative brick panels and representing a swan, a double eagle and a lion.

The registers date from 1671. There is a Judas window in the inner door, which has an old door handle with two lizards being emblems of good luck to those who enter. There is an illustration of this in the British Museum.

Outside the church there is a hole in the porch wall through which a rail was fixed to prevent the parson's stock from entering the church when grazing the churchyard. There is a "Sacrificing Bell" over the chancel arch; it has very recently been restored to full working order.

It is also a surprisingly large church, and the tower is particularly handsome with details picked out in red brick. There was once a clock face on the west side of the tower, the church clock bell can be found in the church. There is much red brick in the nave wall, and a substantial aisle. This is, an **early church** which looks late medieval because of strategic

rebuilding in the late 15th and early 16th centuries. The windows here seem to be all 19th century, adding another layer of disguise.

You step into an atmospheric interior, a common feeling in a lonely church. Although the 19th century restoration here was fairly substantial, there is still the rustic feel of a simple country church. There are some good medieval survivals, not least medieval glass that has been reset in the aisle window. One pane, which is rare in East Anglia, depicts an angel musician playing a lute. The other is a composite of pleasing fragments: some faces, flowers, a sheep, an eagle, a heraldic device. They are arranged about a Marian monogram.



Behind the altar is a large stone reredos depicting the Last Supper whilst not uncommon as these were produced in volume at the start of the 20th century it is still much admired. See also the beautiful 15th century font, of the East Anglian style, angels and evangelistic symbols around the bowl and proud lions about the stem.

This church shares its pattern of services with our sister church All Saints Shotesham. This church is currently used for the first and second service of each month plus special festival services, marriages and funerals.

We keep alive the traditional country services of Plough Sunday, Lammastide, and Harvest Thanksgiving. These traditional services are always popular and well attended with visitors welcomed in from surrounding areas.

In terms of the history of the last century few changes took place until recently. On the North side of the church between two buttresses there was built around 1900 a lean-to boiler house from which a coke-fired boiler warmed the church by passing heated air through large cast iron pipes. In 2007 this boiler house was rebuilt and now houses a hot air heating system the whole plant running on Calor gas.

In 2013 for the first time the church saw the benefit of mains electricity fresh water and drainage. That same year the pews in the side chapel had to be removed so that the flooring which had rotted could be replaced. That done the Church Council decided that better use of the side chapel could be made as a meeting area with a toilet and a kitchen. The oak kitchen disguised as a robing chest was designed and built locally. These works continue 800 years of evolution of this church and speak with confidence for its future use.

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