



About St Margaret's

The origin of the place-name is unclear – it may refer to the dwellers at the hill (*knot* is Old English for a hill) or someone called Cnotta. Knotting (*Chenotinga*) is listed in Domesday Book (1086); the first documented record of the church is in 1174 when it was a chapel within the nearby parish of Melchbourne. In the 12th and early 13th centuries the church's patron was St Neot's Priory; by 1275 Hugh Bossard of Knotting Manor was the patron. A later patron was the Duke of Bedford.

The church stands in the middle of its churchyard which contains part of a medieval churchyard cross, converted in 1921 into a memorial to those killed in the First World War. St Margaret's appears to date from about 1130, when the nave and chancel arch were built, although parts of the nave walls may be late Saxon, suggesting a church stood here in the 11th century. In the 13th century the chancel was lengthened and partly realigned. There is a wide variety of styles of window, reflecting the periods of rebuilding or enlargement. The church is constructed of limestone rubble with a few pieces of reddish stone (possibly ironstone), with roofs of clay tiles.

Repairs were carried out by the architect Henry Clutton in about 1875 and were unusually sensitive compared with so much Victorian restoration. Further work was carried out by (Sir) Albert Richardson in the 1930s.

St Margaret's was vested with The Churches Conservation Trust in 2009 – the small and scattered populations of Knotting, Knotting Green and Knotting Fox were finding it increasingly difficult to maintain the building. The church registers date from 1592 and are held in the County Records Office.

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Church of
St Margaret

Knotting, Bedfordshire



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1 The church is entered through the south **porch**, dating from the mid-19th century when the village belonged to the Bedford Estates. On the left is a list of rectors (note the 17th-century incumbent Arthur Alvey). The door and latch are probably 17th century.



2 The **pews** towards the west end date to the 16th and 17th centuries; the bench near the pulpit is earlier. On the nave walls are some 50 **hat pegs**. Only men used them, which gives an idea of the village population: in 1861 it was about 160, now it is 40. The nave floors contain a number of **ledger stones** mainly to members of the Maxey and Brown families.

3 The 14th-century octagonal stone **font** with Victorian oak cover. The backs of the benches around the font are lined with matting made from rushes growing in the River Ouse; this prevented the limewash underneath coming off on people's clothes. The matting was restored by (Sir) Albert Richardson in 1933.

4 The **tie beams** hold the feet of the roof rafters, preventing them from pushing the walls apart. The roofs have been repaired over the years – the central tie beam is carved with the date '1669' and 'CW'. There are a number of stone **corbels** or brackets supporting the roof timbers, carved with grotesque faces, and also some wooden ones.

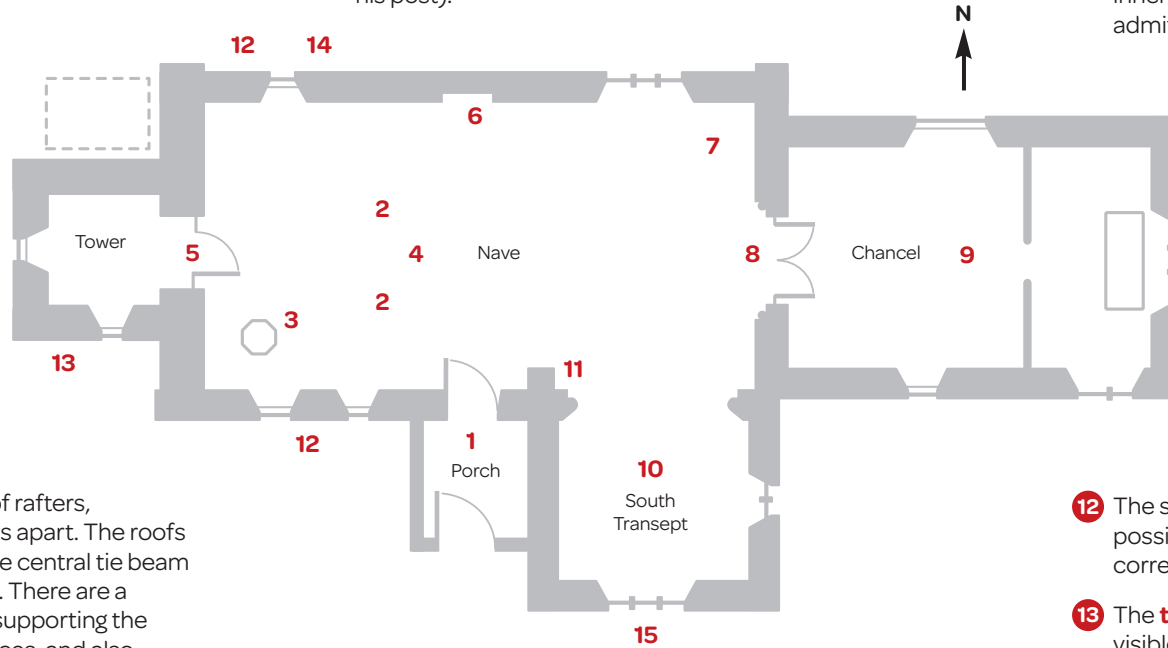


5 The large **tower arch** was the church's west entrance before the tower was built and was widened when the tower was added. Now it leads into the bottom chamber of the tower.

6 The blocked north **doorway** is opposite the south door.

7 The two-decker **pulpit** with tester or soundboard (cover) is probably 17th century and incorporates wooden panels from a house. The Officiant took the service from the lower level and the sermon was delivered from the higher.

8 The round Norman **chancel arch** of about 1130. The chancel is closed off by spiked gates, installed in 1637 and kept locked except during times of divine service so as to prevent cock-fighting from taking place (Arthur Alvey, a 17th-century rector, held the stakes in the betting at cock fights and was later ejected from his post).



9 The church **walls** are red – the colour was found under layers of white limewash. The **chancel** was rebuilt in the late 13th century: its alignment deflects slightly to the north. The oak communion rails with twisted balusters are 17th century. The roof is concealed by a plaster ceiling, once painted dark green. The floor has some 17th-century ledger stones mostly to the Scrivens family, with a medieval grave slab under the chancel arch.



10 The **south transept** has more hat pegs on the west wall. The arch into the transept has different heads and bases to the columns on each side, suggesting the stonework originated from elsewhere. Slots in the masonry indicate a former screen or earlier seating arrangements. The two windows are probably 13th century, partly renewed in the 17th century. There are wall monuments to William Maxey (d. 1810) and family, and to Mary Ann Surr (d. 1862).

11 Brick **chimney**, dating from the 1930s restoration by (Sir) Albert Richardson, for a coke heating boiler: the inner flue inside the brickwork heated the air admitted through the side grilles.



12 The south nave **wall** between the porch and tower is possibly late Saxon (11th-century) work, as is a short corresponding length of the north wall.

13 The **tower** was probably built in 1614: the date is just visible in the small panel well above the clock face. Perhaps it was the accumulating debt for the tower that led to the Revd A Alvey's cock-fighting exploits. The clock dates to about 1750; one bell from a ring of three remains in the tower, cast at Whitechapel in 1828 by Thomas Mears II.



14 **Mason's mark** on the side stone of the window. The position of the blocked doorway is also visible nearby, emphasised by a row of bricks.

15 **Sundial** with painted square dial and iron gnomon (indicator).