



## About St Margaret's

St Margaret's stands prominently in the centre of the village close to High Green. The earliest name for the settlement was Agden or 'Acca's valley' but in the 12th century it became Adboldesley meaning 'Eadbeald's woodland glade'. The first mention of the church is in 1138 and the first known incumbent was Robert Grosseteste in 1225, the Oxford theologian who became Bishop of Lincoln. The earliest visible evidence is rather later with the chancel arch of about 1280. The rest of the building followed rapidly during the 14th century with an aisled nave, then a free-standing tower and the link walls joining the tower to the nave, and finally the clerestory (upper windows) lighting the nave. Local materials were used: cobble rubble for the walls, limestone and dark brown ironstone for carving and corner-stones. Two bells were recast in 1748 and the nave furniture was replaced in 1854. The chancel, north vestry and north porch were rebuilt by William Butterfield in 1861 in a thorough restoration.

This manor was owned by Countess Judith when Domesday Book was compiled in 1086 but her earldom of Huntingdon passed to David I of Scotland in about 1138. The Scottish connection continued both in the main manor and its tenants until the 14th century. In about 1340 the church was granted to Balliol College, Oxford and they provided the clergy until 1919.

Maintaining so large a church in a small village proved too difficult and in 1976 St Margaret's was vested in The Churches Conservation Trust to be preserved as part of the nation's heritage. The chancel and vestry are still maintained and used by the parish.

## A thousand years of English history awaits you

The Churches Conservation Trust is the national charity protecting historic churches at risk.

We've saved over 340 beautiful buildings which attract almost 2 million visitors a year.

With our help and with your support they are kept open and in use – living once again at the heart of their communities.



### Access

Due to their age, historic church floors can be uneven and worn, and lighting can be low level. Please take care, especially in wet weather when floors can be slippery.

### Help us do more

We need your help to protect and conserve our churches so please give generously. To become a CCT Supporter please pick up a leaflet or go to our website.



THE CHURCHES  
CONSERVATION TRUST

[visitchurches.org.uk](http://visitchurches.org.uk)

The Churches Conservation Trust  
Society Building, 8 All Saints Street, London N1 9RL Tel 0845 303 2760



[facebook.com/ChurchesConservationTrust](https://www.facebook.com/ChurchesConservationTrust)



[twitter.com/The CCT](https://twitter.com/The_CCT)

50p

Registered Charity No: 258612

© CCT 2013

your church tour



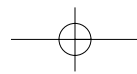
Church of  
St Margaret

Abbotsley, Cambridgeshire



THE CHURCHES  
CONSERVATION TRUST





FOLD



**1** The **nave** was the area for the village congregation. Here they stood to listen to services conducted within the chancel. The chancel arch of the 13th century is the earliest surviving feature. The nave was expanded with aisles on both sides. The south side with three octagonal columns is earlier, perhaps of 1300–20; the north arcade with three quatrefoil columns followed soon after in about 1330–50.

The roof of this nave was supported on corbel heads (stone brackets): six original heads were used by Butterfield when he provided a steep-pitched roof. The clerestory (upper) windows are in 15th-century Perpendicular style. The **font** is a plain octagonal bowl tapering towards the base.

**2** The **west tower** was added to the nave in the late 14th century with a simple pointed arch. On its floor are the head-stocks of four of the ancient bells. The fifth still sounds the hour for the 18th-century clock.

**3** One of the **bells** stands on the floor in the **south aisle** and is inscribed MILES GRAY MADE ME 1653. Beside the south door is a stoup, a stone bowl for holy water. There is no external evidence for a south porch.

**4** Further along the south aisle is an impressive **tomb recess**, dated about 1340. It has diaper work (foliage in squares) in the ogee (double S-shaped) arch and upon the slim buttresses which terminate in tall pinnacles. There is now no monument under the arch. The two shields represent the Tilly family who held the manor throughout the 14th century, so this may be the tomb of Henry Tilly who died in or before 1334. On the south side close to the east wall is a piscina with a lobed bowl. The **piscina** is the basin and drain where the priest washed his hands before and after celebrating Mass. Opposite, on the north wall, is a blocked door arch leading to the stone stairs which allowed the priest to reach the rood altar on top of the chancel screen.

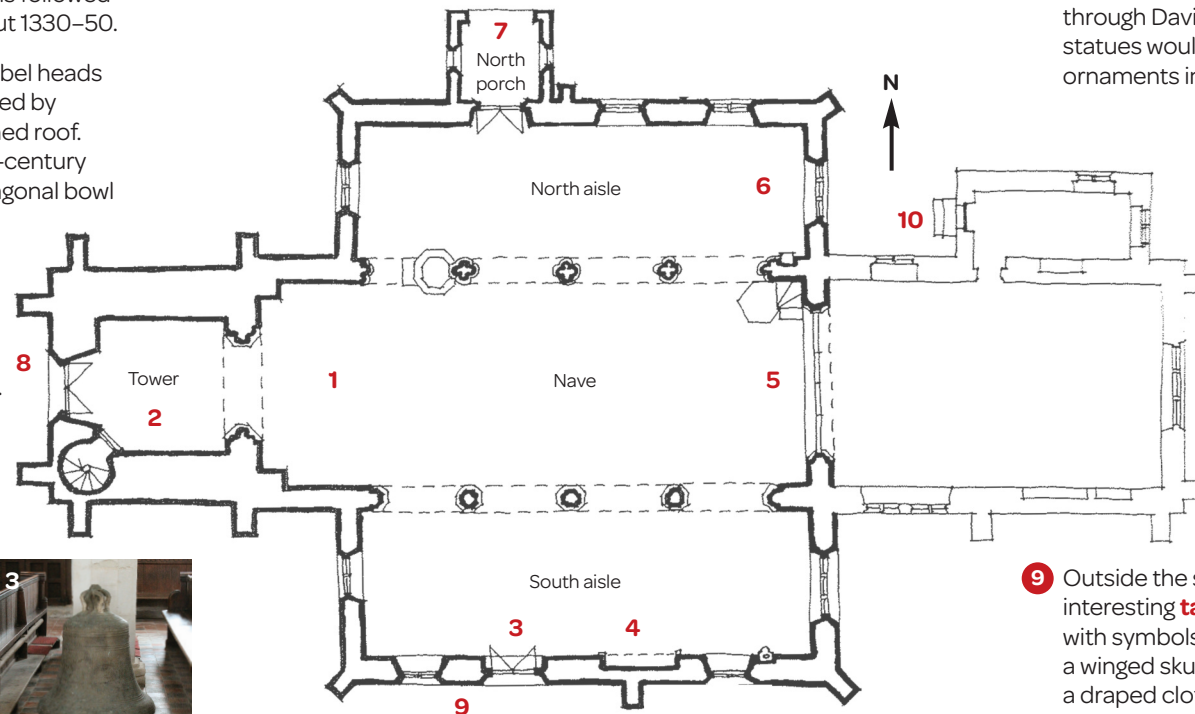


**5** The 13th-century chancel arch contains a much repaired 15th-century **wooden screen**. Although the side panels were replaced when the screen was moved back from the tower arch in 1982, much of the remainder is original work. It is decorated with foliage neatly fitted into the heads of the lower arches and with intertwined rope ornament over the doors.



**7** The **north porch** was newly built by William Butterfield in 1884. He also rebuilt the chancel and replaced nearly all the decaying windows.

**8** The impressive **tower** of three stages has well preserved windows and a large west door, but the most notable features are the four gargoyles below the battlements and the four statues forming the corner pinnacles. These statues are of late 16th-century date in Renaissance dress. It is locally claimed that they represent William the Conqueror, Harold the last Anglo-Saxon king and two Scottish rulers, Macbeth and Malcolm. A possible link is through David I, King of Scotland. However these statues would be more appropriate as garden ornaments in a nobleman's park.

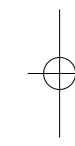
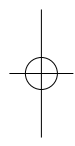


**9** Outside the south-west corner of the south aisle is an interesting **table tomb** decorated on all four sides with symbols of mortality: a winged hourglass, a winged skull and crossbones, and a skull above a draped cloth. A long inscription on the lid commemorates William Heylock who died in 1688 aged 63. The nearby group of headstones display fine cursive lettering.

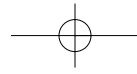
**10** On the west wall of the vestry over its door is a very ornate **niche** decorated with angels supporting the base and with pinnacles decorated with tightly curled leaves rising in a spire above the empty space where a statue would have stood.



Photograph of exterior by the Revd Stephen Day



FOLD



FOLD