



About St Mary Magdalene

Tortington, the homestead of Torhta's people, is recorded in Domesday Book (1086), in which 30 acres of meadow and woodland for 6 pigs are mentioned, but no church.

This tiny church was built in the mid-12th century to serve the lay community who lived here as tenants of Tortington Priory. The Priory had been founded just half a mile to the north by Alice de Corbet who was possibly the mistress of Henry I. It was always a small monastery, closing in 1536, and whilst little evidence of its buildings remain, St Mary's continued in use as the parish church of the small farming community.

There has been little change in the outward appearance of the church since it was first built. In the 13th century a narrow south aisle was added but at some later stage this was removed. In 1860 the aisle was rebuilt by the restorer of the church, G C Coote, who also added a small vestry on the north side. Further repairs were undertaken by Philip Johnston in 1904.

The church is built of local grey and white flint with Caen stone dressings brought by sea from France, and also some patching in red brick. The roof is a 'cat-slide' covering the south aisle and nave under one slope. At the west end is a small bell-cote containing just two bells, one medieval and one of 1873.

In the 20th century the combination of a declining population and the existence of another parish church nearby at Ford led to the church being declared redundant in 1978 and vested in The Churches Conservation Trust.

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

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)



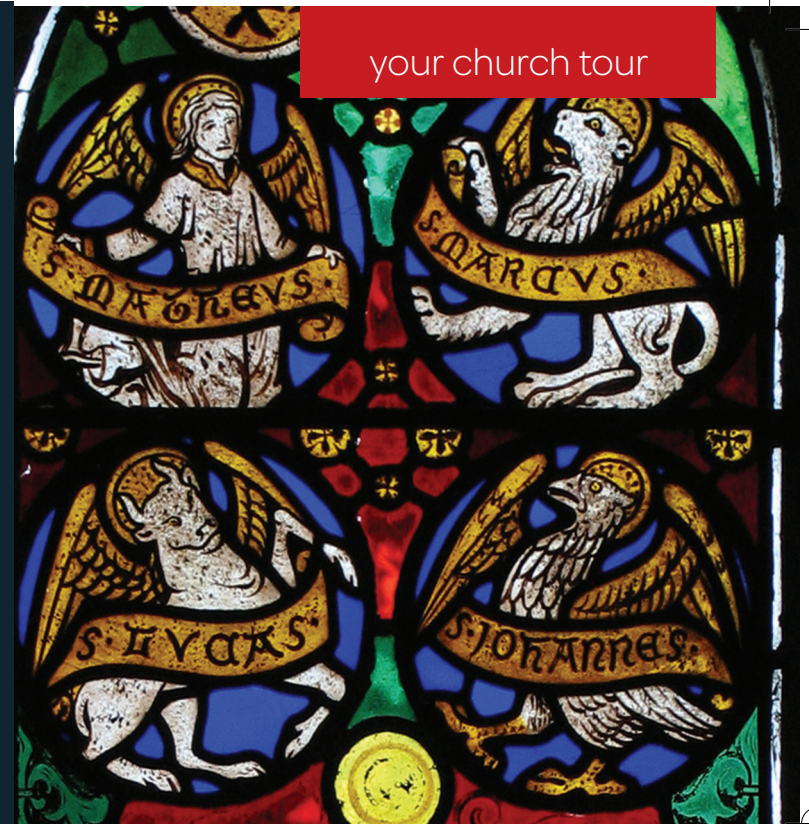
[twitter.com/The CCT](https://twitter.com/The_CCT)

50p

Registered Charity No: 258612

© CCT 2013

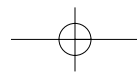
your church tour



Church of
St Mary
Magdalene
Tortington, Sussex



THE CHURCHES
CONSERVATION TRUST



FOLD



1 The **south doorway** is a splendid piece of Norman carving. It is of four orders with zigzag and dog-tooth mouldings. Since being built here in the 12th century it has been moved to the centre of the church (when the aisle was demolished) and back again when it was rebuilt by the Victorians. The wooden door has some good 19th-century iron scroll-type hinges.

2 The huge tub **font** is carved from another piece of Caen stone. Its design is less formulaic than the doorway, suggesting that it may have been carved by native Saxon workmen under Norman supervision. The bunches of honeysuckle and shell motif are highly unusual, although a similar example is known at Bishop's Teington in Devon. The honeysuckle motif is similar to that on the marble tomb slab of Gundreda, daughter of William the Conqueror, in Southover church near Lewes. The circular base is Victorian.

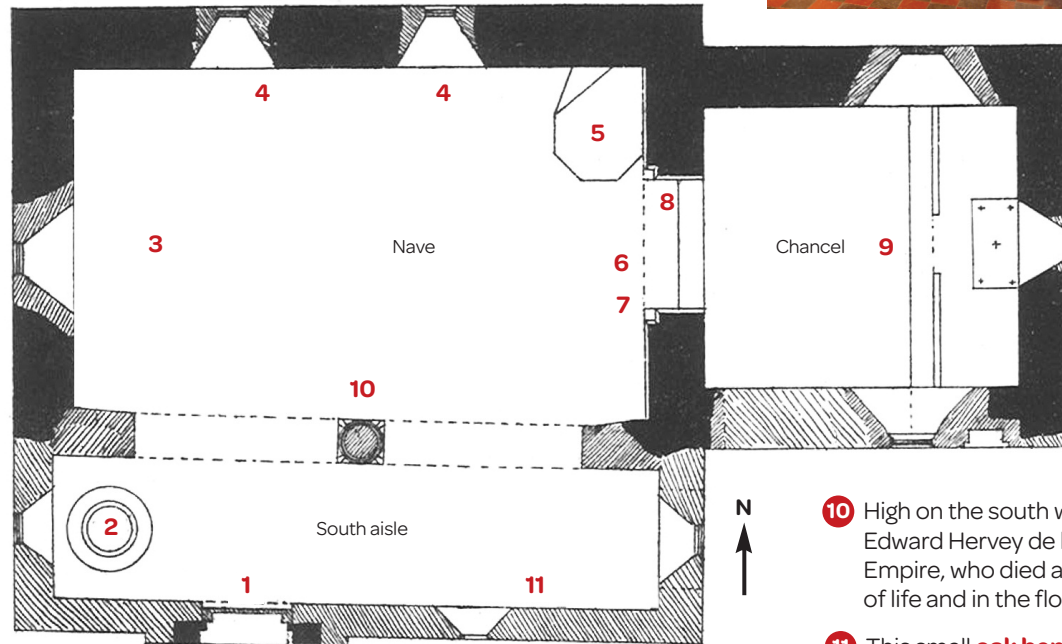
3 The **roof** of both nave and chancel takes the form of a crown-post, probably of 14th- or 15th-century date.

4 Two **north windows**, depicting St Richard of Chichester and St Mary Magdalene, are by the well-known stained glass artist Charles Eamer Kempe who lived in Sussex. Kempe's trademark – a wheat sheaf – may be seen in the lower left-hand border of the westernmost light. They date from the late 19th century. Below the Kempe windows is a small brass plate commemorating George Cosens Cootte. Churchwarden for 50 years, he was responsible for rebuilding the aisle.

5 The 17th-century oak **pulpit**, with pannelled sides and decorated carving on top, is of particularly fine quality. It appears to have been reduced in size, probably in the 19th century.



6 The highlight of the church is the **chancel arch**, which is of the same date as the south doorway and font but of altogether different design. There is no doubt that the influences here come from Scandinavia. This type of carving is known as 'beakhead' and it is clear to see why. There are two bands of masonry – the outer band being formed of bird's beaks which grip a roll moulding. The leaves or feathers from which the heads grow have a variety of designs and the whole would once have been brightly coloured. The keystone over the arch bears the name of W F Leeves and the date '1750'. Leeves no doubt paid for repairs to this church at the time.

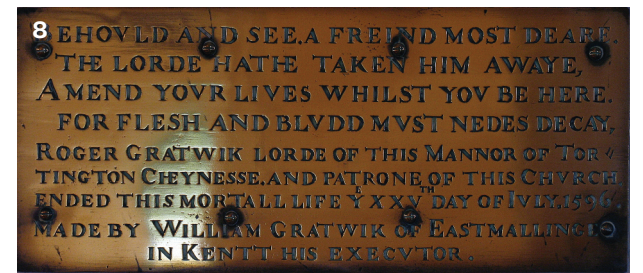


9 The **stained glass** in the chancel is especially interesting. The east window is a rare and important piece by Thomas Willement, of 1836, commissioned by the incumbent, the Revd J de la Feld. It depicts the symbols of the Lamb of God, the Holy Trinity and the Four Evangelists (cover). The other chancel windows, and those in the south aisle, are skilled and charming work of the 1860s by Henry Wright, an Arundel plumber/glazier born in 1822.



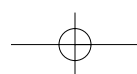
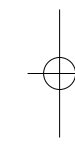
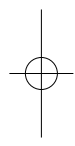
10 High on the south wall of the nave is a **tablet** to Edward Hervey de la Feld, Count of the Holy Roman Empire, who died aged 34 in 1837 'cut off in the prime of life and in the flower of his age'.

11 This small **oak bench** is all that remains of the medieval scheme of seating in the church. It dates from the early 15th century and has carved tracery on each end.



7 High above the arch are two **hatchments** carried at the funerals of members of the Leeves family and depicting their coats of arms. One is to the William Leeves whose initials are on the keystone, who died in 1781. The other is for Richard Leeves who died in 1787. The painting of the Crucifixion between them is a copy of an old master.

8 This small **inscription** on a brass plate commemorates Roger Gratwik, Lord of the Manor and patron of the church, who died in 1596. He built Tortington Place which was constructed largely using materials from the demolished Priory.



FOLD

FOLD