



## About St Mary the Virgin

Edlesborough church stands on a mound with beautiful views across to Ivinghoe Beacon and the chalk downs. It is now believed that the place name probably derives from the Old English 'Eadwulf's beorg' or hill.

It is built of local limestone, repaired and reinforced by Roman cement with flints in decorative patches. The oldest parts, including the chancel walls, two of the chancel windows and the pillars in the nave, are 13th century. In the 14th century the Chantry Chapel of Our Lady and All Saints (now used as a vestry) was added. A chantry chapel is where Mass was said for deceased donors. The tower was added in 1340.

In the 15th century the north and south porches, the clerestory (windows high up in the nave), and the chancel, nave and north aisle roofs, with their turret-like corbels (brackets), were added. Some ornate woodwork survives from this period: the rood screen, chancel stalls, pulpit and pulpit cover. The chapel was extended and became the Rufford family chapel. The old communion table, now by the south door, and the painting of Aaron in the south aisle are from the 17th and 18th century.

In the 19th century a new clock and replacement glass in the older window frames were installed, and in 1875 a fuller programme of restoration took place. This included removing the west gallery, replacing pews, painting walls and the rood screen, and new windows in the chancel (including the east window). The south aisle and chapel were re-roofed, and a new organ, the Ten Commandments painted on two thin metal sheets and floor tiles were added. It is likely that changes were also made to the chapel.

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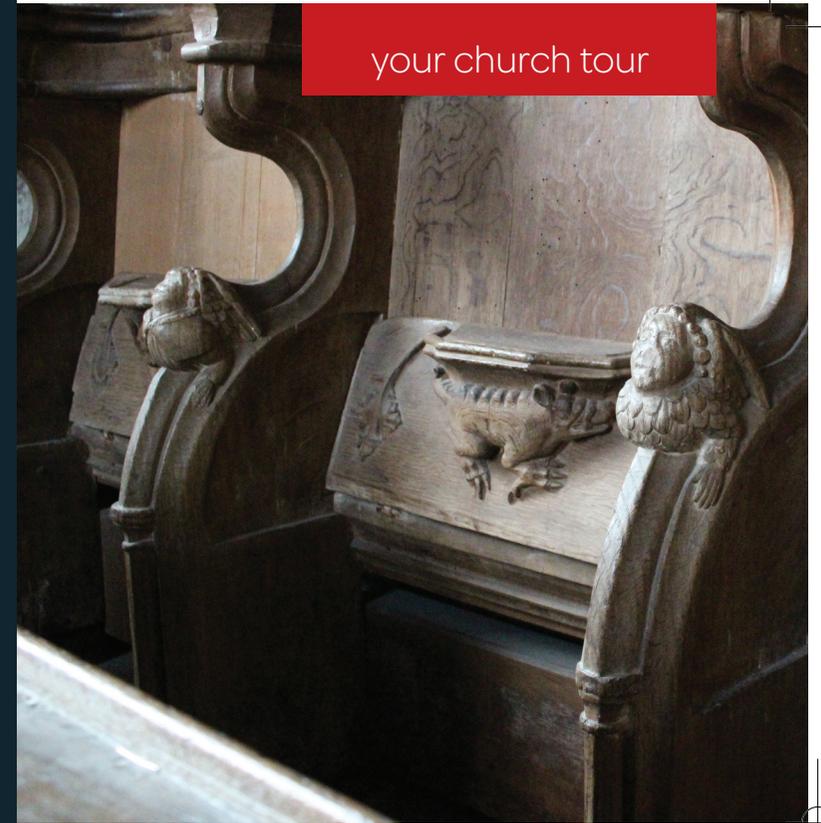
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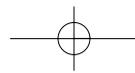


Church of  
St Mary  
the Virgin

Edlesborough, Buckinghamshire



THE CHURCHES  
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1 The octagonal **font**, used for baptisms, probably dates from the 15th century.

2 The angel **wall paintings** of 1867 by Daniel Bell are part of the Victorian restoration.

3 This small **stained glass window** in the north-west corner of the north aisle is thought to show St James (the Apostle, also known as 'St James the Great'): the scallop shell of his hat is his symbol. St James is the patron saint of Pilgrims and of Spain. The window is believed to be 15th century, although it was much restored in the 19th.

4 Above the door to what would have been a chapel, is a large section of Victorian **French ironwork**: it is believed to be a bedhead belonging to a French aristocrat.

5 The main section of the beautifully carved octagonal **pulpit and canopy** is 15th century, but the hourglass stand is 17th century. It was restored in 1867.

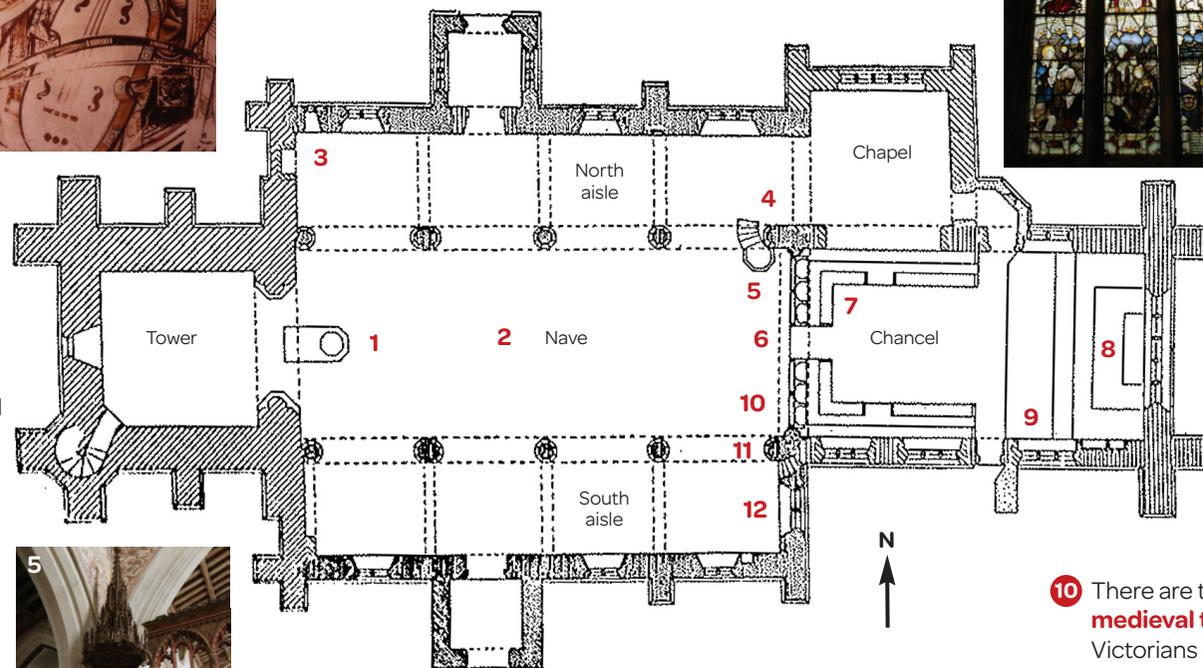
6 The intricately carved **rood screen** between the nave and chancel was installed in the 15th century and painted in the late 19th century. The remains of the rood loft stairs can be seen going through the pillar. The loft itself would have been removed in or following the 16th-century Reformation.



7 Backing onto the rood screen are 15th-century carved seats. Some of these are hinged, so that when the clergy had to stand for long periods of time during a service they could perch on the small shelf on the underside of the seat. These are called **misericords** (cover). They are beautifully carved in fantastic animal shapes.



8 The **sanctuary** around the altar has some interesting features. Behind the altar is a reredos (decorative screen) dating from 1895. To the right of the altar are the piscina (basin for the priest to wash the communion vessels after Mass), a 15th-century bracket which probably once supported a statue and seats set into the wall (sedilia).



On the floor close to the altar used to be a brass in the shape of a rose with the following inscription:

*What I spent I had,  
What I gave I have,  
What I refused I am being  
punished for,  
What I kept I have lost.*

The rose was chosen as a symbol of the fragility of human life. Sadly the original brass was stolen and only the shape in the stone can be seen.



9 The glass in the **window** at the east end of the south wall of the chancel is by Kempe. Charles Eamer Kempe was one of the most influential Victorian stained glass window designers. His distinctive signature yellow wheat sheaf motif can be found at the bottom left-hand corner of the window. The window dates from 1898 and commemorates Revd A F Birch (vicar at the time of the 1867 restoration).

Kempe studied architecture with George Frederick Bodley and worked with him on the interior painting of All Saints' church in Cambridge. Kempe windows can be found in other local churches including St Lawrence, Broughton, Milton Keynes. All Saints' and St Lawrence are both in the care of The Churches Conservation Trust.

10 There are three patches of **medieval tiles** which the Victorians chose to leave in place when most of the church was retiled. The easiest to see is close to the lectern; the others are by the pulpit and in the chancel.

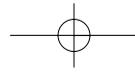


11 On 28 March 1828 lightning struck the church and set fire to the tower. One of the timbers rescued from the fire was reused and carved into the **lectern**, with the inscription 'Ereptum Ex Igne' (snatched from the fire). The five bells in the tower were damaged by the fire, but the metal was reused to cast six new bells.

12 The small **side altar** has a 15th-century piscina and a tall niche, which probably used to house a statue or cross, alongside it. The presence of the piscina shows that this altar was used for Mass at a more private service in the south aisle.



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