



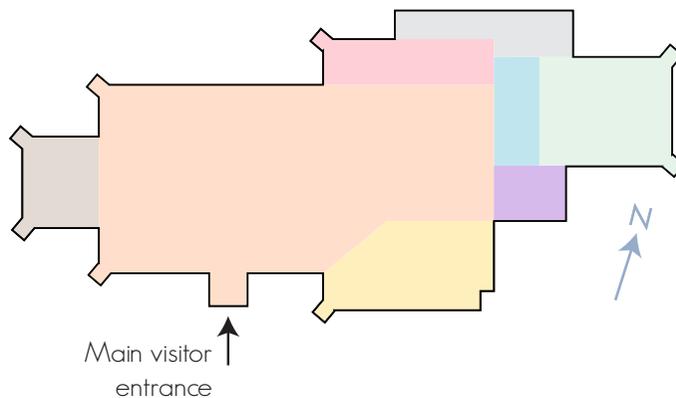
Monumental brass took the place of three-dimensional monuments in the early part of the 13th century. Made of sheet brass they were fixed into the floors of churches where they would cause no obstruction and take up no space. They quickly grew in popularity and continued to be used for the next three centuries.

The earliest surviving brass in the church is that depicting a civilian effigy without head or arms. It is believed to be a depiction of **William Brudenell** of Northants who married into the local Raans family and was Lord of the Manor of Raans and Coleshill in the late 14th century. William's brass, together with that of his son, **Henry Brudenell and Henry's wife Eleanor (1430)**, can be found set into the floor under the carpet in St Andrew's chapel in the north transept.

Also in St Andrew's Chapel can be found the brass to **Thomas Carbonell (1439)** and wife **Elizabeth (1438)** as well as that to **John de la Penne (1537)**, ancestor of William Penn, famous Quaker who founded the state of Pennsylvania.

As formerly mentioned, in the Drake Chapel can be found the unique child brass commemorating **John Drake** who died in 1623 aged three, and on the east wall of the south transept is a brass inscription to **Richard Champneys (1439)**, draper of London.

Our Church



- Nave
- Tower
- Chancel
- Drake's Chapel
- St. Andrew's Chapel
- St. Catherine's Chapel
- South Transept
- Vestry

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St Mary's Church

Old Amersham



At the heart of the community

A free guide to the origins and history of the 12th century parish church of St Mary's

St Mary's Old Amersham dates from around 1140 A.D. though the site has been a holy one for much longer, as it stands where a Roman Road crosses the River Misbourne. The missionary monks of St Augustine, St Birinus and indeed earlier evangelist Bishops would baptise their converts at just such a location.

As the town expanded during the middle ages, the church was extended, widened and heightened, coming to look much as it does today. The main part of the nave is the oldest part of the church, dating from the 12th century and built in the early English style. Later, in the 14th century, the north and south aisles were added, with the south porch, St. Catherine's Chapel, the roof of the nave and the tower constructed in the 15th century.



The Drake Chapel, upper vestry and South Chapel (now home to the organ) were added in the 17th century and the lower vestry, office and most of the stained glass windows in the 19th. The only exception being the east window - a 17th century Flemish glass donated by William Drake in 1760.

The window in St. Catherine's chapel is an excellent example of the work of Kempe Studios, founded by Charles Eamer Kempe, one of the foremost makers of stained glass in the 19th century. The signature of their work - a wheat sheaf and a tower - can be seen in the glass.



In approximately 1620, the Drake family (distant cousins of Vice-Admiral Sir Francis Drake) bought the town and its estates, remaining patrons of the Parish to this day. In 1870 Rector Edward Drake began restoring the church to its mediaeval interior layout and had the exterior clad in flint.

The Drake Chapel, entered through a doorway in the chancel, was formerly a private monument room standing over the Drake family vault. To the right of the altar is a rare example of a child brass dated 1623. The room was converted into a chapel in 1967 and is one of the finest examples of its kind in the county.



St Catherine's Chapel on the north side of the Chancel, was the private chapel for the family of Raans Manor. At some point in the past the walls were lined with shelves and it was used as a vault. Then, in 1908 it was restored to its original use and the coffins re-interred in the north side of the churchyard. It was restored again in 1971 when the carved scene of Oberammagau was guided.

St Andrew's Chapel was formerly the north transept and is now used as the creche. Beneath the carpet are some fine brasses dating from 1430. The roof is 14th century and the arch between the transept and St. Catherine's chapel from the 15th century.

St Mary's Church is just one of 155 churches worldwide to have a twelve-bell ring. The sound of the bells can conjure up the joy of weddings and the solemnity of remembrance and provide a characteristic back-drop to English Sunday mornings in Old Amersham.

At the base of the Bell Tower is the Choir Vestry, which was renovated in 1995. The beautiful West Door is from the 19th century and is only used for weddings and festivals. On the south wall, the entrance to the spiral staircase that leads up to the bell tower is through a 15th century arch and the doors to the ringing and bell chambers are also of this period.



More info on the bells.

Look out for...

- The Chancel's starry ceiling, decorated in 1965 but whose corbels are believed to be as old as the 13th century.
- The mediaeval Font, from 1310.
- The Tudor Rose carved in the 15th century vaulted roof of the South Porch.
- A tomb from 1350 in the south transept beneath a 14th century arch. The stone slab is decorated with a floriated cross and two shields but there is no record of who is buried here.
- A small window between St Catherine's and St Andrew's Chapels which was originally a 13th century lancet window. It was blocked in the 15th century but re-opened in 1908 and later glazed in 1995.

