



Information about the Church



The following Services will be held at the Church during 2018:

Easter Sunday Sunrise Service - 0615hrs on Sunday, 1st April 2018

St Mary Magdalene Patronal Festival Service - 1600hrs on Sunday, 22nd July 2018

Christmas Advent Service by Candlelight - 1500hrs on Sunday, 9th December 2018

The contents of this Folder are available on the Home page of our website:

www.st-mary-magdalene-boveney.org.uk

Donations towards the ongoing refurbishment of our beautiful Church may be made in the Donations box in the wall near the North Door

Please play the piano if you wish. The acoustics of the Church are quite good!

We do hope that you enjoy your visit.

Please do not remove this Folder from the Church



The History of St Mary Magdalene, Boveney

Extract from "Saving Churches – The Friends of Friendless Churches: The First 50 Years"

By Matthew Saunders

BOVENY, ST MARY MAGDALENE, near WINDSOR, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

Despite being within earshot of Heathrow Airport and barely a mile from the mass tourism of Windsor, Boveney seems sleepy. The approach is delightful. Visitors either cross Dorney Common (careful of the potholes and wandering cattle uncontrolled by fencing) or walk along the towpath by the Thames.

There was a Victorian repair campaign (in 1897 by Webb and Bennett of Oxford) which led to a rather harsh renewal of the window tracery, and there was a cack-handed attempt to keep out the damp by applying an external dado of bricks, probably in the mid-nineteenth century. However the building remained, in Victorian terms, decidedly old-fashioned.

The right of appointment to the living has been enjoyed for centuries by Eton College. However, the authorities there never seem to have favoured Ecclesiologist so St Mary's escaped the reforming zeal the Oxford Movement. Indeed, mention 'Boveney' to an Old Etonian and, if we are honest, he is far less likely to think of the church than of Boveney Lock or Meads. To which many a pupil has sculled.

Such memories appear in the autobiographical jottings of W.E. Gladstone, William Makepeace Thackeray and Ian Fleming. No doubt some Old Etonians are among those who have scratched their initials into the architraves of the north and south door. Izaak Walton recommended Boveney for pike and barbel fishing.

And in 2012 everyone will know Boveney, for it is here that the Olympic Rowing will be held in Dorney Lakes, created west of the church by the College. But back to St Mary's.

The interior is still single-cell without a discrete chancel, and the interior, with its plaster barrel vault and naive, mostly eighteenth-century, fittings and medieval pews, evokes a very uncomplicated informal piety.

It seems to have originated in the twelfth century when it was not so remote. The reason it is set back from the Thames is because the area between it and the river was taken by a

long-lost quay, from where goods were unloaded and transported. For centuries it was known as the bargees' church.

Apart from the external galletting (slivers of flint pressed into the mortar supposedly to keep out the damp, but surely much more an example of a jeu d'esprit), we have come to value the building in recent years for its remarkable two-storey weather-boarded and timber-framed tower.

This threatened to be our nemesis. Part of the ongoing repair campaign involved its opening up. It is constructed on four 'legs', and we found that two of them, hidden under Victorian plaster, had rotted away.

Repair bills for the tower alone, originally estimated at £60,000, soon approached £200,000. We were in every sense rescued by the skill of the architect, Nicola Westbury, and contractor (recognised by the 2005 RIBA South Conservation Award), and by the generosity of our principal funder, English Heritage, which donated a total of £130,000 (and another £86,000 for works to the roof, which we finished in 2008).

We have re-established a very special relationship with Eton College, which organized a fund-raising concert in 2005. This helped us to raise the partnership funding, which eased drawdown of the English Heritage grant.

Dendrochronological dating carried out at the same time as the repairs to the tower have identified a felling season of between the mid-fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, although the timber bell frame may be even earlier.

The bells will ring again in triumph when the repairs are fully complete, as we know they did in 1855, announcing to those in earshot the victory over the Russians at Sebastopol.

The very attentive may have noticed that the church served as a backdrop for a brief scene from Kevin Costner's 1991 film *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves*.

Date of vesting: 1983

Grade of listing: I

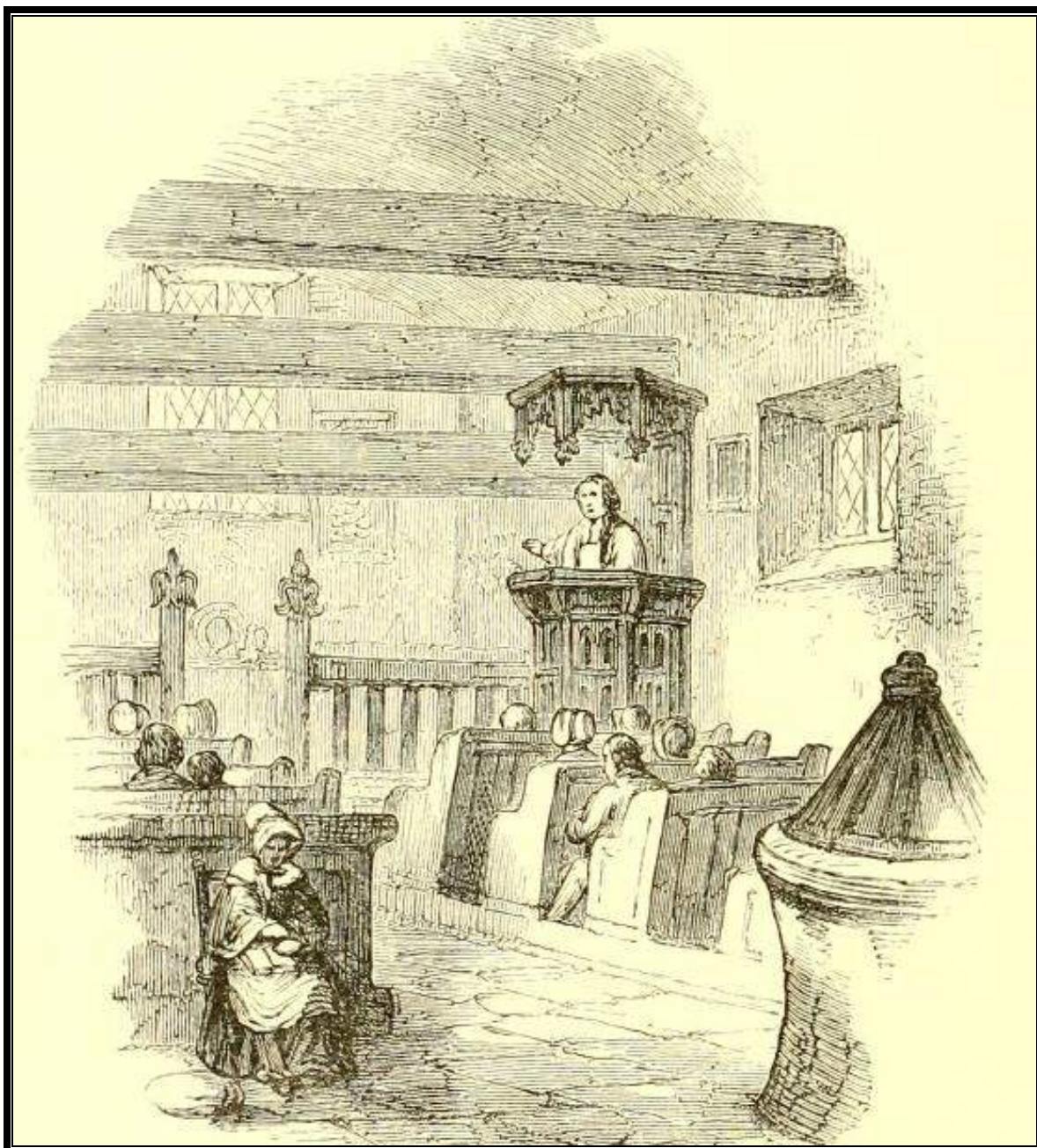
Architect for the initial repairs after vesting: David Nye, for present programme of repairs: Nicola Westbury (Clive Dawson, engineer)

Contractor: For present programme of repairs: F. J. Williams of Henley (and R. & G. Smith of Slough)



FRIENDS OF ST MARY MAGDALENE
— ON THE THAMES AT BOVENEY —

A Service at St Mary Magdalene c. 1850





Some Historical Notes on the History of St Mary Magdalene, Boveney



The Chapel of St Mary Magdalene, Boveney, Buckinghamshire, SL4 6QQ

- The chapel of St Mary Magdalene, Boveney stands on a site which has been a place of worship since before the Roman conquest.
- Its origins are obscure but it is first mentioned in 1266, when the offerings there were assigned to the vicarage of Burnham. No further reference to it has been found until 1508, when Robert Aldridge of that parish left 3/4d to it by his Will.
- The Chapel was annexed to Burnham as a chapel of ease when the advowson of Burnham was given to Eton College.
- An Act of Parliament in 1737 to make Boveney a separate living failed for want of sufficient endowment. The Vicar of Burnham and his curate held a service there on the first Sunday of each month, but in 1767 the chapelry demanded a service every Sunday and protested its independence except as regards burials.
- It appointed its own churchwardens, looked after its own poor and repaired the highways.

- By an order in Council dated 25th May 1911, Boveney Liberty was ecclesiastically annexed to Eton, to which the church of St Mary, Magdalene is now a chapel of ease.
- The chapel originally served the village of Boveney and surrounding area which at that time was one of the largest villages in the area.
- The Chapel was probably used by bargees and other riverside folk when there was a busy wharf nearby used for transporting timber from Windsor Forest.
- The church was declared redundant in 1975 and there was then a possibility that it would be demolished or sold for conversion to residential use.
- Local residents, however, fought to save the chapel and it was eventually leased at a peppercorn rent to the Charity Group in London known as 'The Friends of Friendless Churches' who now maintain the building.
- It is still a consecrated church building, (although not licensed for weddings) and is used approximately three times per year, at Easter, at the Patronal Festival of St Mary Magdalene in July and at Christmas.
- The walls of the chapel are of chalk rubble garreted with small flints with dressings of sandy limestone and clinch. The buttresses are modern.
- The main window is 16th Century. The south doorway, similar to the north, has a 15th Century label.
- In the west wall, high up is a small lancet window probably 12th Century with head of limestone and jambs of clunch.
- The bell turret rests on a framework which itself rests on the ground.
- The chapel pews were installed about the 15th Century (everyone had to stand before that!), and some of the original ones are still here.
- There is a set of three church bells in the tower, two by Ellis Knight 1631 and 1636 and a third probably 16th century.