



## **The Parish Church of St. Margaret of Antioch**

The original church may have been built in the 13th century, perhaps in 1280. It was quite small and at that time had no spire, vestry or porch, but there was a rectory by 1297.

The stone from Chilmark, famous for being used to construct Salisbury and Chichester Cathedrals, was used to build the church at Chilmark. It is a Grade II listed building and the churchyard holds many Grade II listed tombs and gravestones

The advowson was part of Chilmark manor, so up until the time of the Dissolution of the monasteries each rector was presented by the Abbess of Wilton. The advowson then passed to the Earls of Pembroke. In 1577 however, the Crown presented a nominee; he was a chaplain to Elizabeth I. After this, the Earls of Pembroke properly took control of the advowson. In 1662, Sidney, Earl of Pembroke and Montgomery, transferred the advowson to John Morrison, who later became Baron Margadale. In 1646 the rectory was entitled to the tithes from nearly the entirety of the parish. This meant it certainly had an above average income.

The church was dedicated to St Margaret by the 18th century, and is thought to have come from the fair which was held on St Margaret's day in the 17th century, to the north west of the church itself. Of course the dedication may well be older than the 17th century.

The doorway of the church is over 700 years old and was built at some point in the 14th century. It is decorated on the sides with two figures of men wearing pleated collars. One is wearing a crown and is holding a stick of some sort. The church tower has a tapering spire and a belfry held by four arches and a vaulted roof. The spire was added to the church in 1750 and the pulpit is thought to be Jacobean. The vestry was built in 1844, prior to the big refurbishment of the 1850s. A new organ was given to the church in 1848 by a Mr F. King. This was built by Bevington and Sons of Greek Street, Soho. It is not known what happened to the old organ. There was once a western gallery and external staircase but this was removed at an unknown date, perhaps during the renovation of the mid 19th century.

The church was closed temporarily in 1856 when repairs and enlargement took place to the designs of T.H. Wyatt. It opened once again in October 1857 and a new roof had been built and a new aisle added on the north side of the church. Stained glass was put in the east and west windows. Chilmark stone was used in this refurbishment, to remain true to the original character of the church.

The north transept holds a staircase leading to the bell tower, which holds six bells. The oldest of these is an "Angelus Bell", which is rather rare. The "Second Bell", the old treble, was cast between 1200 and 1300. All the bells were restored in 1974.

In the 1890s the skeleton of a young girl was found under the west part of the Rectory (now known as the "Old Rectory") and this discovery has led to the belief that the house is haunted. It is a Grade II listed building.

Electric church lighting was installed in 1934. The chancel was redecorated in 1951. The walls were plastered red and lime washed. A tablet in the church gives the 62 names of men who left the village to fight in World War One. The names of those who died in that war and World War Two are displayed on a cross in the churchyard. In 1977-1978 the south transept of the church was repaired, redecorated and consecrated as "The Chapel of the Ascension" as part of the parish's Silver Jubilee celebrations.

The parish registers date from 1653 (christenings) and 1654 (marriages and burials), other than those in current use, are held in the Wiltshire & Swindon History Centre at Chippenham.

In 1976 St Margaret's at Chilmark was united with Tisbury and Swallowcliffe with Antsy to create the benefice of Tisbury. It is now part of the benefice of Nadder Valley.