

It does not take a great leap of imagination to see St Edmund's as the centre of a small English village - church, pub and a school across the road. The Red Cow has been a pub since 1753, originally the village stocks stood outside and the village mortuary was in a shed behind.



THE YEW TREE is the oldest thing in the churchyard, it was growing on this site before the Norman Conquest. When the church was shut during the 2020 pandemic, the Easter Candle was lit in its shadow. Perhaps this was a pre-Christian religious site, there may well have been an Anglo Saxon church here. Perhaps a missionary monk stood under the tree and preached the Good News of Jesus. In the Domesday Book of 1086, Allestree is an outlier of the main settlement at Mackworth. It is named as Adelardstrew, so perhaps this is Adelard's tree. The church is dedicated to St Edmund, a Saxon King of East Anglia - this might be another pointer to a Saxon foundation, although another school of thought says this dedication is a Victorian invention. Yew trees often grow in churchyards, probably for the practical reason that yew berries are poisonous to sheep, and yew provided the material for the English arrow - it is said that the scars in the base of the tower are the marks of where young Allestree men sharpened their arrows.

The Norman church is built of strong local gritstone and has withstood the ages well. The stone may have been quarried from an area once known as the Stonehills, and local quarries were sited at the bottom of Kings Croft and in the woods at Burley. The tower dates to about 1200, it would have been added to the original stone church, and is the oldest church tower in the city of Derby. In the thirteenth century, along with the church of Mackworth,

St Edmund's was granted to Darley Abbey, and its tithes went to the monastery. For many years it was a chapel of Mackworth serving the small hamlet of Allestree, and there were no rites of baptism, marriage and burial here until 1596. The church was rebuilt between 1865 and 1866 by the local firm of Stevens and Robinson, and then became a parish church. They kept and restored the original tower and most of the north aisle, they moved the porch, and they started afresh with the Nave and chancel. The Derby historian Maxwell Craven wrote in 2020 that the church keeps its "high Victorian ambience".



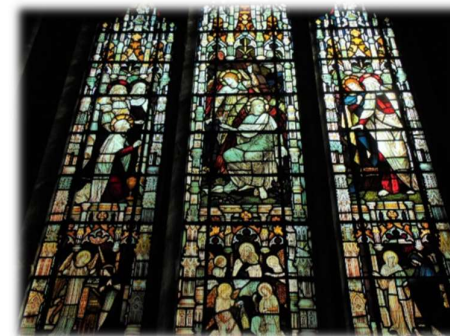
Before we enter, have a close look at **THE PORCH AND THE DOORWAY**. This is a Norman arch, restored and reset - it was moved to the south when the south aisle was added. Pevsner's guide describes it as "Inner jambs and inner arch with quadruple chevron without intervening capitals. Then an order of colonnettes with beakheads biting into them and the same repeated in the roll-moulding of the arch. The outer label has partly upright stylized leaves, partly a kind of four-petalled flower with the petals of fern-like shape." Some have seen it as depicting the parable of the sower with ears of corn of varying fruitfulness surrounded by watching devils waiting to pluck "the Seed" from the hearts of the unwary. According to Maxwell Craven, the stout Victorian oak door with curly strap hinges and furniture is by William Haslam.

Walk into **THE NAVE**, the name comes from "navis" a ship. The oak pews were given and installed in 1932-3. Look up at the ceiling which was restored and repainted in 2020. Step up into the chancel and look at the delicate metal screen which was dedicated to the memory of Colonel Gisborne by his son, their family being almost the last private owners of Allestree Hall and its estate. Craven

suggests that the screen is by Edwin Haslam (son of William who made the door). The organ, by Wood of Huddersfield, is dated by its Queen Elizabeth II Jubilee crown.



At the east end of the church is a fine collection of **MONUMENTS**, but it is easy to miss the oldest. On the left of the altar, at ground level, is what we would like to believe is the fourteenth century tomb of the founder of the church. We don't know the name of the man who was once interred beneath it, but it is likely that he was one of the Touchet family, Lords of the Manor of "Allestry" and benefactors of Darley Abbey. On the other memorials, the Mundy family lived at Markeaton Hall, and the Evans family built Darley Abbey Mill.



THE EAST WINDOW is a celebration of Easter - the angels tell the women and the disciples Peter and John that "Christ is risen". On the bottom row we have Mary - at the Annunciation (when Gabriel tells her she will be the mother of Jesus), with the baby Jesus and adoring angels, and walking away from the cross after her son's crucifixion. In the south window we have two men - one, with a

splendid beard, wears a crown, the other, younger, man, points to Christ on the cross. Is the first Saint Edmund and the second John, the beloved disciple - or have you another suggestion? Pevsner says that the Nineteenth Century glass is by Powell. In 1834 James Powell purchased the Whitefriars Glass Company, based off Fleet Street in London. Over the next few years they experimented and developed new techniques, devoting a large part of their production to the creating of church stained glass windows. The firm acquired a large number of patents for their new ideas and became world leaders in their field, business being boosted by the building of hundreds of new churches during the Victorian era.



In **THE LADY CHAPEL** the window also celebrates Mary. The Annunciation on the left, the Nativity in the middle, and the Presentation of Christ in the Temple - Mary, Joseph and Jesus bringing the baby to the Temple in Jerusalem and being greeted by Simeon, the old priest who acknowledges Jesus as the light.



In the North wall we have Twentieth Century windows, Jesus the healer and Jesus with children. The clothes the girl is wearing are very much of her time.

At you step down from the Lady Chapel, with its statue of Mary and Jesus, the simple wooden pulpit is in keeping with the pews. The Lectern, made of brass, is in the form of an eagle, with outspread wings, resting on an orb. This

signifies "the Word of God" being borne out into the world, for the Bible is placed on the eagle's back. Notice the guardian lions at the base. The font is at the back of the church and is made of alabaster - apparently it in the same style as an earlier pulpit. The text "Suffer little children" always seems appropriate as we bring children to baptism - modern translations of the bible simply read "Let the children come to me" (Matthew 19.14). There is also a rather lovely angel, presumably from the earlier church - by the door to the choir vestry at the back of the church.



There is a nineteenth century stair turret, and there are three bells housed in the tower. They are named

1. MARY: Sadler, Churchwarden, G. Hedderley fecit Nottingham 1790.
2. GOD SAVE HIS CHURCH, 1711
3. I TO THE CHURCH THE LIVING CALL AND TO THE GRAVE DO SUMMONS ALL, 1781 Joseph and Francis Sadler, Churchwardens, Hedderley founder Nottingham. The weight of this bell is 8cwt, 26 lbs



Thank you for visiting the church – you are always welcome. After over a thousand years, it is still a place where the God's peace is found and God's love is proclaimed.



St Edmund's Allestree

For more information please see
www.stedsandstmatts.co.uk