

Haughley St Mary's

At Haughley the tower is sited in an unusual position: south of the nave rather than west. Its Y-shaped 'Early English' windows allow us to date it fairly precisely at 1300 A.D. Its diagonal buttresses are only at the front, and it can safely be concluded that a pre-1300 chapel of some description stood between the nave and the tower. The ground floor of the tower forms the porch, which was traditionally the place for villagers to carry out financial or legal transactions. Its secular role is illustrated by the pegs on the porch roof: they are for the fire buckets described elsewhere. The magnificent doorway into the church is Early English, and the south door is inscribed with the date 1699 (which may be the date of the door or the date of a repair). The first floor of the tower is the ringing chamber, where a resourceful team of bell-ringers gathers for practice on Monday evenings. Brick and wooden stairs lead from the ground floor to the chamber. It has been suggested that the moulded supports for the banisters are remnants of the rood screen, and that the moulded timber of the porch ceiling may be from the rood beam. The bells themselves are two floors above the ringing chamber. There are five of them, reputedly the heaviest ringable five in Suffolk. Four were cast from the pre-reformation bells in 1579 by Stephen Tonni of Bury St. Edmunds, and are inscribed: "DE BURI SANTI EDMUNDI STEFANUS TONNI ME FECIT WL 1579 SUMPTUS NOSTRORUM SUNT HAUGHLYE VIVORUM". The treble was made in 1702 and recast in 1885 by John Warner of London in memory of local surgeon W. Ebdon. It is inscribed with the details of the recasting. The church also has a set of hand-bells. The tower clock (which is wound twice each week!) was installed in 1903, a gift of the Bevans of Plashwood.