

**W**hilst the Domesday Book (1086) records Caldecote and mentions a priest it does not record a church. Yet, it appears that the flint lower walls of the present building date from this period, as does a blocked Norman window visible outside above the north door.

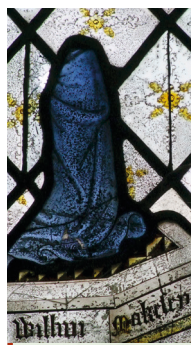
Most of the church now dates from a rebuilding in the fourteenth century. It is built of hard chalk – called Clunch – and Totternhoe stone, with rubble of flint and ironstone, and later brick repairs. Clunch is particularly prone to weathering which gives the church a more battered feel than many. The church was declared redundant in 1978 and is now owned by The Friends of Friendless Churches who are supported locally by the Friends of Caldecote Church.



Norman window



Shoe graffiti



Stained glass figure

## Interior

The south porch may seem rather large for a small church but in the medieval period this was the communal meeting place for the parish and legal transactions took place here. Hence the stone bench seating, on which people have left their marks in the form of outlines of their shoes. The large pinnaced stoup in the porch was added in the fifteenth century for the faithful to cross themselves with holy water before entering the church. The base is just like a miniature font. The step down from the porch into the nave is much eroded, showing that this was originally the main way into the church. The medieval door has the tell-tale marks of old nails and pins across it marking where official notices were formerly posted.

High up in the south nave window is a headless figure in stained glass to William Makesey, priest here in the early fifteenth century. To his left is an attractive jumble of fifteenth century canopies, collected here from other windows.

The south window of the chancel is filled with 12 ovals of post-reformation painted glass scenes, now very much decayed, although it is still possible to identify the Nativity and the Adoration of the Magi. The floor of the chancel is twentieth century. The candle sconces and candelabra were installed in memory of Ivor Bulmer-Thomas who founded the Friends of Friendless Churches in 1957.

The church has no chancel arch but was originally divided into nave and chancel by a wooden screen – you can still see where it stood by a wooden step near the early nineteenth century pulpit. The church contains just two wall monuments – on the south wall of the nave a tablet with skull to Francis Squire (1732) and on the north wall of the chancel to the first Lord Caldecote, Lord Chancellor during WWII.

In the nave are a series of fifteenth century plain benches. These would have been made in a carpenters' shop and then brought to the church for assembly. If you look closely inside each base you can find the original numbering in Roman numerals that ensured each piece fitted correctly.



Instruments of the Passion



The font is the main treasure of the church and dates from the fifteenth century. Octagonal in shape it has traceried panels on each side, and beneath each alternate panel is a shield bearing a saltire, a cross, instruments on the Passion and three crowns. The latter is the Arms of the Diocese of Ely. The bowl is lead lined and carries graffiti, as does the tower arch. The tower is supported internally by two arches, in the south and north walls, which make it rectangular in plan, rather than the more usual square.



Text: John Vigar. Photography John Vigar and Adrian Powter

## Other Friends churches near St Mary Magdalene, Caldecote

### St Denis, East Hatley

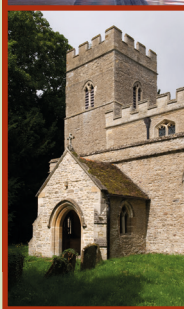
The nave dates to 1217, but much of the surviving medieval elements are from the 14th century. Most of the extant work is by William Butterfield. This church was used as a nature reserve for many decades (contact office for keyholder details).

### St John the Baptist, Papworth St Agnes

There has been a church on this site for nearly a thousand years, but the distinctive chequerboard design of clunch and knapped flint you see today was a 1850s re-build by the Ecclesiologist J.H. Sperling (contact office for keyholder details).

### St Mary, Hardmead

A medieval church with interesting monuments to the Catesby family, and a marble carving of the 'Nancy Dawson' on the memorial to Robert Shedden who died searching the Arctic for the lost expedition of Sir John Franklin (contact office for keyholder details).



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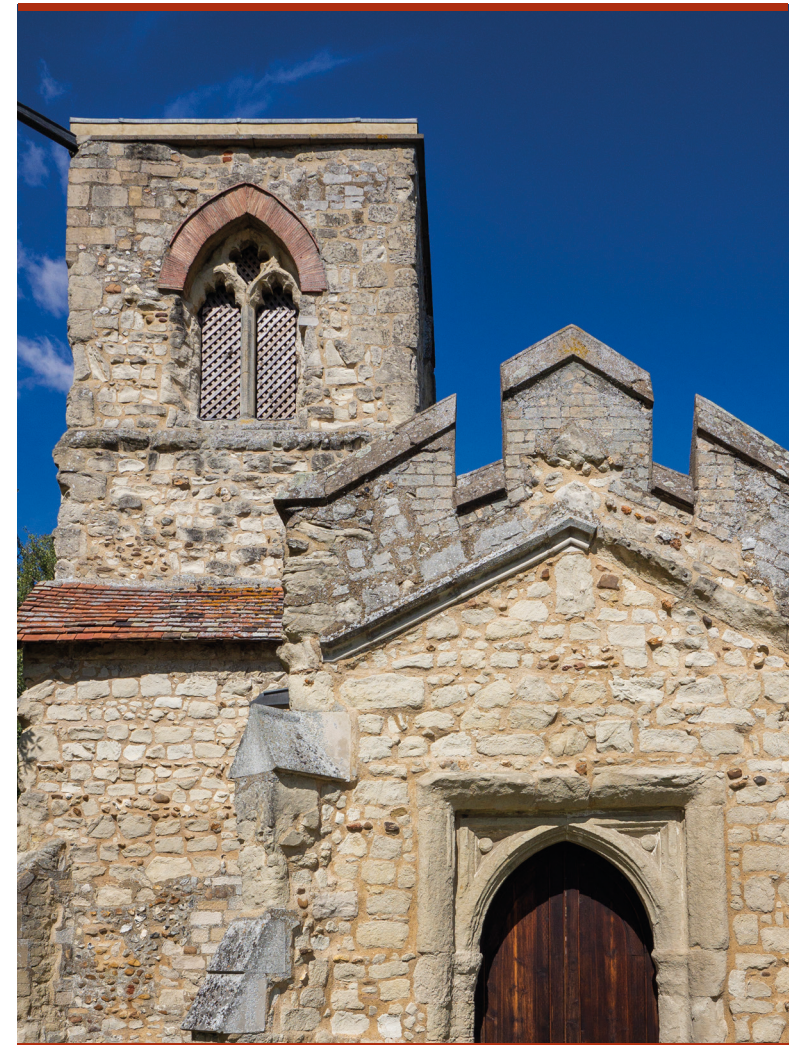
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Church of St Mary Magdalene  
**Caldecote**

a guide to its history