

ST EDMUND'S CHURCH

The parish church of St Edmund has been in constant use for over 900 years.

Why was the church built here, so far from the present village, within the walls of a Roman town that went out of use some 700 years earlier?

There are at least two possible reasons. Firstly it may well have been rebuilt on the site of an earlier church founded here in Roman times. The plan on the left shows how it fits into the Roman street pattern. A second possibility is that the present church was built by the owner of the Anglo-Saxon manor house which may have stood in or near the abandoned Roman town.

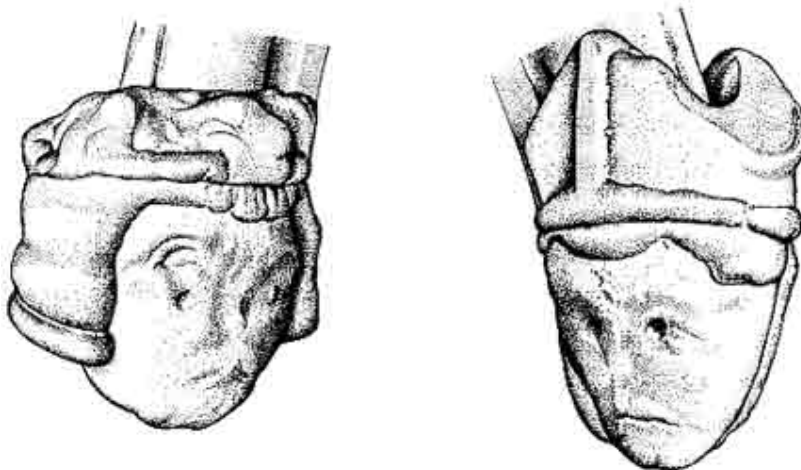
Certainly a church stood here in the reign of King Edward the Confessor (AD 1042-1066). He gave the manor and the church of Caistor to the Abbey of Bury St Edmunds. This probably accounts for the dedication of the church and the village to St Edmund.

The earliest part of the church, the nave, is over 900 years old. Its south-west corner, at the rear of the building next to the tower, is made from red tiles robbed from the walls of the Roman town. The Roman tiles are very similar to the red Tudor bricks of the early 1550's, made over 1300 years later. The Tudor bricks are, however, not so long and a little thicker. The original round-headed windows of the nave have been blocked up and replaced over the centuries and are now no longer visible.

Changing fashions and the needs of the religious community have resulted in several alterations to the building. The drawing (below) shows how the church you see today has been built up over the centuries.

Inside the porch you will find the stone heads of a king and a bishop or abbot, looking at each other across the entrance to the church. The doorway dates from the 1300's. When you enter the church you will see the superb stone font, carved with religious symbols and the arms of Edward the Confessor and St Edmund. The font was a gift from the Guild of St John the Baptist at Caistor in the 1400's.

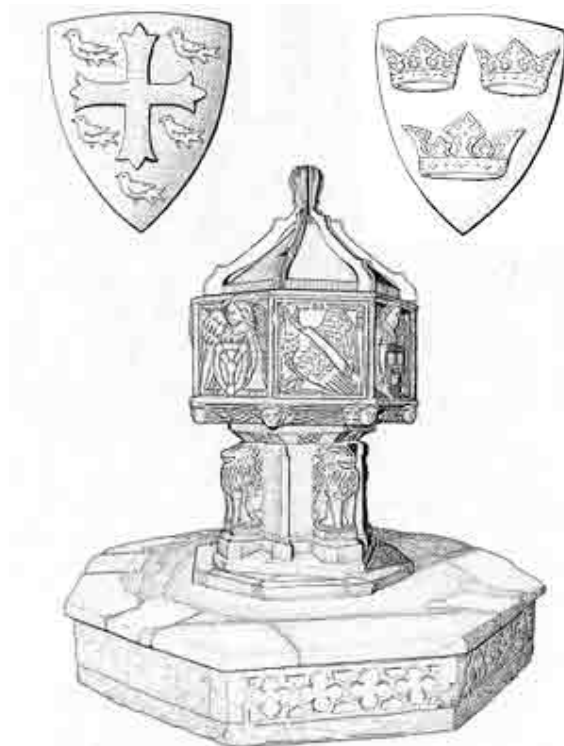
If the church is locked, you will find the address of the key-holder on the porch noticeboard.



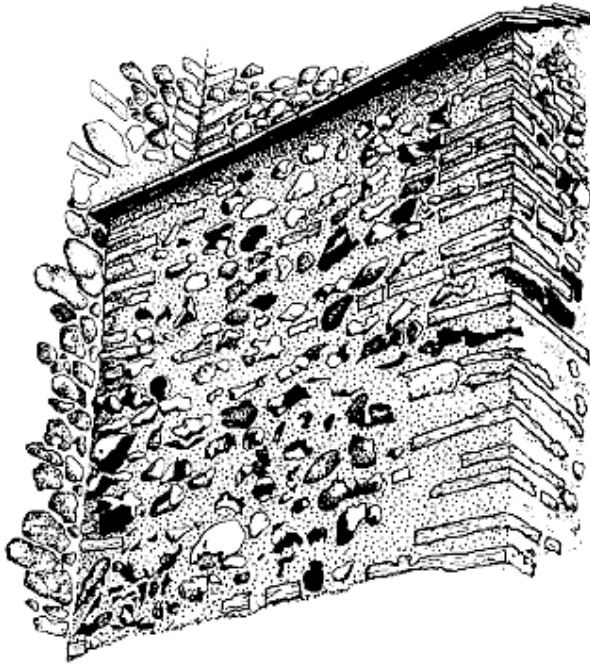
The carved stone head of a king (left) and the head of a bishop or abbot (right) from either side of the main doorway.



Plan of the town showing how the church fits into the Roman street pattern.



Font from the church at Caistor St. Edmund's



The red Roman tiles (above) re-used to build the south-west corner of the nave.