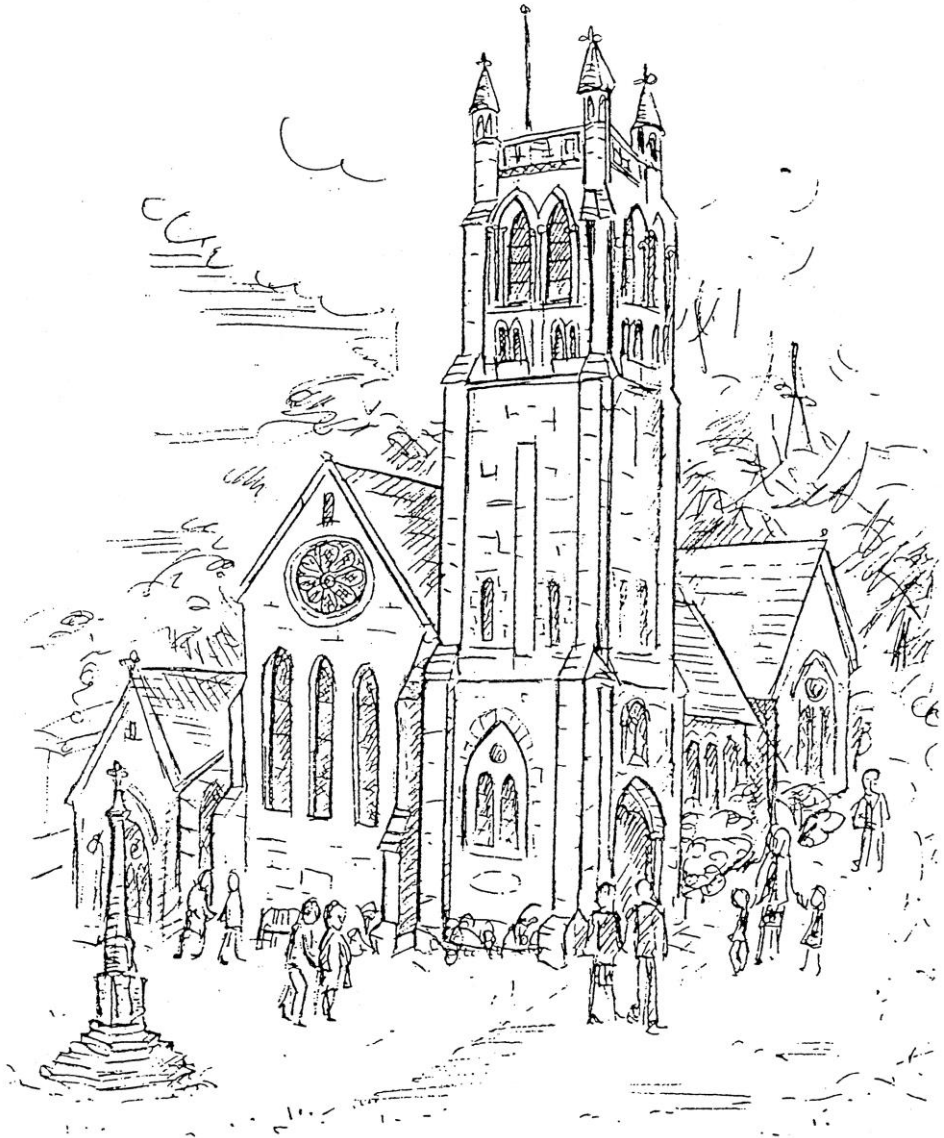
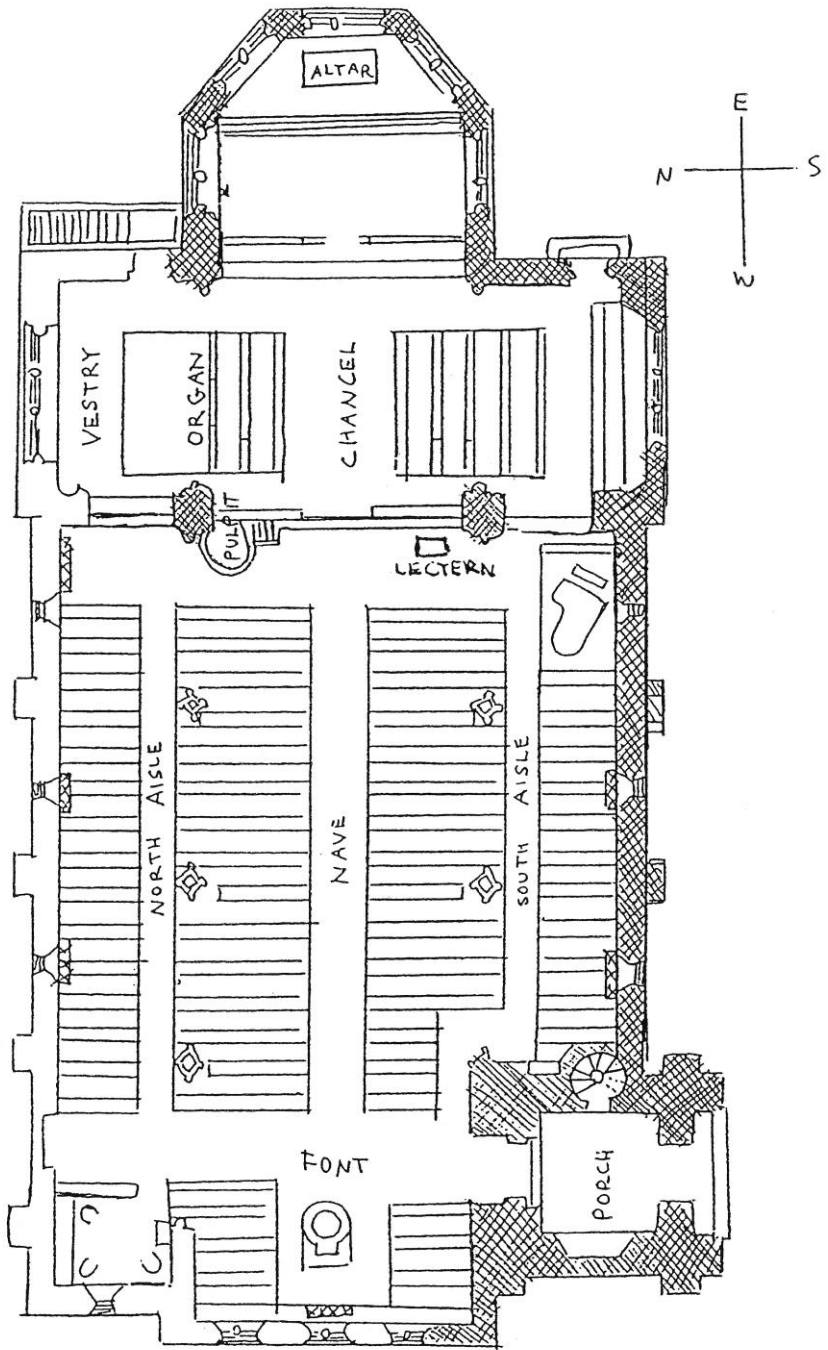


THE CHURCH OF ST MARY, KIPPINGTON

SEVENOAKS, KENT



A short guide



Ground Plan

1998



Welcome to the Church of St Mary, Kippington

Kippington was originally within the Sevenoaks parish of St Nicholas, and St Mary's Church was built by the generosity of Mr William James Thompson of Kippington House and his sister Esther at a cost of £12,500. The foundation stone on the outer west wall was laid by Mrs Thompson on 14th May 1878. It bears a quotation from Ecclesiastes 9, v 10 "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might". This precept was followed, as the Church took only two years to build, the consecration by the Archbishop of Canterbury taking place on 7th June 1880.

The Church was designed by a local architect, Mr J M Hooker, but very much within the overall concept of the founder. The style is Early English Gothic, and the Church is a fine example of Victorian church building. The contractor for the building and the furnishings was Mr W B Wilson of Canterbury, who used Kentish ragstone for the main fabric, quarried close to the site, with dressings of Westwood stone. The ground plan is rectangular, with an apse at the east end. There are transepts north and south across the chancel, and side aisles, and a pitched roof runs the length of the nave. All the windows, except those in the aisle, have hood-moulds with carved floral stops, and a band of stiff leaf carving runs round the apse.



The square tower at the south-west corner, which houses a single tenor bell, has four pinnacles and a double slatted lancet window on each side with pillars and mouldings, with four smaller ones below. The lower section serves as the porch and main entrance.

The Centenary Room at the north-west corner was added in 1897. Apart from this there have been only a few minor alterations to the original design, thus preserving the harmonious unity sought by the founder.

Henry Percy Thompson, the fourth son of the founder, was Vicar of St Mary's, 1895 - 1919. He wrote the first Guidebook which gives an account of *'the thoughts which my Father desired should be conveyed by ornament and detail to those who should worship within its walls.'* His words will be used in this Guide where appropriate.

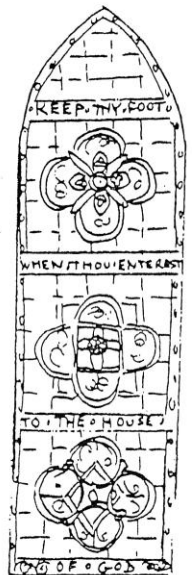
THE PORCH *'Man cannot approach to God but in the spirit of faith and humility. Above the entrance therefore stands a statue of Faith.'*

The statue is based on the design of a window by Sir Joshua Reynolds at New College, Oxford.

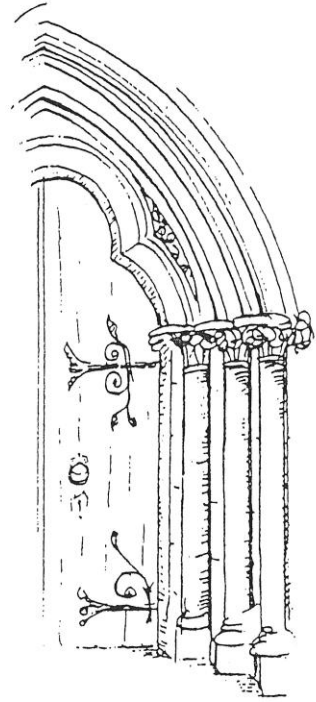


The entrance is through a double arch, a trefoil-headed arch inside a pointed one, with pillars of Bristol pennant blue stone each side with simple carved capitals.

The double-lancet window is by Heaton, Butler and Bayne, featuring decorative quatrefoils with bands of lettering, bearing precepts from the Old Testament *'to remind the worshippers to enter the House of God in reverence and humility'* The round window above has a demi-angel holding a scroll with the inscription "Alleluia".



The south door of panelled oak, with two pairs of large scrolled wrought-iron hinges, is trefoil-headed to fit the stone frame, which is a repeat of the outer entrance arch. It is more elaborately carved, with numerous mouldings and three pillars of blue Bristol stone on each side with stiff-leaf capitals.



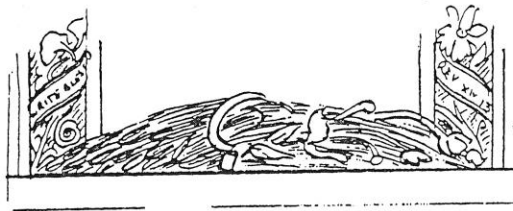
THE FONT near the south door, signifying that by baptism we enter the church, is made of Carrara statuary marble, carved by R Carnielo of Florence, and is a copy of one in Florence Cathedral.

It was specially commissioned by William Thompson, and is unusual in having no drain, for which special permission had to be obtained from the Ecclesiastical Commissioners. The bowl, in the shape of a quatrefoil, with a cherub on each side, rests on a spiral column standing on a square foot carved with acanthus leaves.

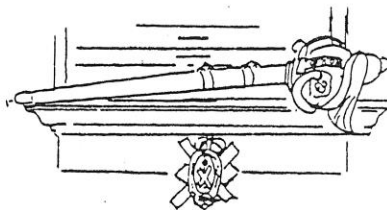
THE WEST WINDOW The window is by Clayton and Bell and consists of three tall lancets featuring the twelve Apostles, each with his name and symbol. Above is a rose window in eight sections, each showing an angel and a scroll of praise, surrounding a central quatrefoil with the Agnus Dei in the centre.

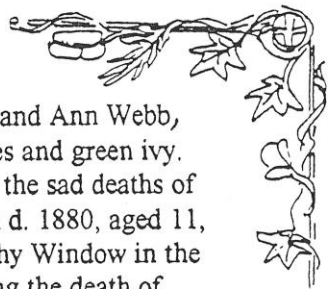
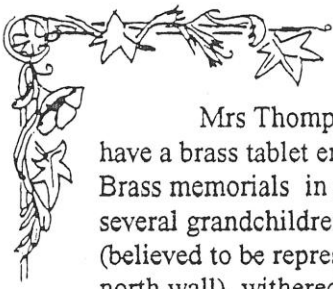
In the north-west corner there is also a single lancet window dedicated to the memory of the founder's infant brother, d. 1845, depicting an angel carrying a sleeping child to Heaven.

THE MEMORIALS Most of the memorials are for members of the Thompson family. William James Thompson had nine children and some of his family are remembered in the Church on wall tablets and in many of the windows. The wall tablets are all round the west end, beginning with that of Henry Percy Thompson, who wrote the Guide, on the left of the door, showing a portrait head in black moulded bas-relief. The most handsome memorial is the alabaster wall tablet in the south-west corner by Richard Westmacott, in memory of Esther Thompson, the founder's sister, who also helped to endow the Church. She died in 1876 before the building began, and the sad circumstances of her death are related in the inscription.



The wall tablet with the carved sword is in memory of William Thompson's son-in-law, William James Harvey, and his grandson, W.J. St. John Harvey, both killed in the First World War. His daughter, Mary Esther Harvey, is commemorated below, and his eldest son, also William James d. 1931, to the right.





Mrs Thompson's parents, John and Ann Webb, have a brass tablet entwined with poppies and green ivy. Brass memorials in similar style record the sad deaths of several grandchildren: Gerald Gadesden d. 1880, aged 11, (believed to be represented in the Timothy Window in the north wall), withered rose buds indicating the death of a child; three Chamberlen children, with Christ the Good Shepherd holding a lamb, with rosebuds and rosemary for remembrance at his feet; and Sylvia Grace, aged 2, with an Easter Cross with lilies of the valley (humility) and a spray of forget-me-nots.



Two more grandsons were killed in the War, commemorated in a hammered copper wall tablet with sprays of laurel and rosemary, an olive branch and withered grass. William James himself is remembered in a rather dark wall tablet, with a hammered copper relief of St Mary's in a heavily carved oak frame, his wife in a tablet below. Their diamond wedding is commemorated in a brass floor plaque beneath the pulpit.

There are three memorials to soldiers killed in the War on the south wall, and on the north wall there is a large memorial tablet to Lt Col George Wemyss Anson d. 1916, capped with an heraldic family achievement. His daughter Mabel is remembered in a white marble cartouche nearby.



THE NAVE is 70 ft long, the chancel adding another 40 ft, giving an uninterrupted view to the altar under a wide chancel arch. The width is 48 ft, including the aisles formed by an arcade of richly moulded arches and pillars either side, each column having four attached shafts of Bristol stone and carved stiff-leaf capitals. The height, emphasised by the high clerestory windows, which run in a continuous arcade along each side, is 50 ft.

'In the Nave the worshippers assemble that they may learn how they may consecrate their human life to God. The Medallions above the pillars illustrate the human life of Christ, and as the church is dedicated to S. Mary, the scenes in which a Mary is the central figure have been selected for the medallions.'

The medallions were carved by Thomas Earp and based on well-known paintings and represent, on the south side, the Annunciation, and the Presentation; and on the north side, Christ at the well, the Deposition and 'Touch Me Not'.

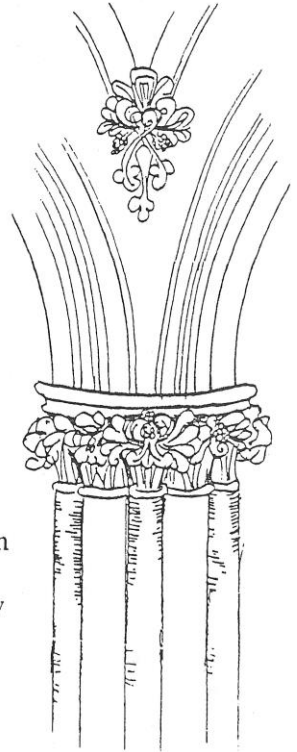
THE AISLE WINDOWS *'represent those sanctifying graces which can uplift human life and make it more like the perfect example.'*

The six lancet windows each contain a figure from the Bible representing one of the virtues listed in Peter II, 1.v 5-7:

On the north wall: Ruth - Faith; Esther - Virtue; Timothy - Knowledge (believed to be a portrait of Gerald Gadesden with his mother).

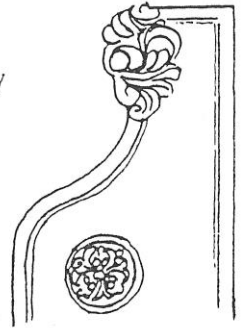
On the south wall: Anna - Godliness; Dorcas - Brotherly Love (possibly a likeness of William Thomson's sister, Esther); The Widow's Mite - Charity.

The painting on the north wall is a copy of Murillo's Madonna and Child by Leopoldo Dumini; and the drawing of the Church is by the architect, John Hooker.

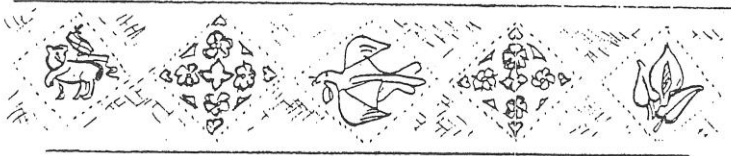




THE WOODWORK is oak, beautifully carved, each bench end and roundel having a different design. In the chancel the carving on the choir - benches is even more elaborate with more stiff-leaf foliage, echoing the stonework.



THE KNEELERS were stitched by ladies of the Parish between 1965 and 1984, in various designs and harmonious colours, but predominantly red and blue. Some are in rice stitch, others in tent stitch on a finer canvas. The kneelers in the chancel and the bench runners are worked in the smaller stitch, with religious motifs on a blue or red background, chosen to harmonise with the painted roof.



THE LECTERN is of traditional design, a brass winged eagle on a globe supported on a spiral column set on a triangular base with three lions couchant. It was the gift of Charles George Hale of Fawke Common for the consecration of the church.

THE PULPIT, elaborately carved in Derbyshire alabaster, with pillars of pink marble, was designed by the architect and executed by Thomas Earp. The hexagonal sounding board, inlaid with a boxwood star, is believed have been a table top from William Thompson's household, and was donated by the Rev H P Thompson.



THE CHANCEL. *'Life on earth should lead to life in heaven: we pass on from the Nave to the Chancel and Sanctuary. Here the ornaments speak of heavenly things. The roof, blue and star-spangled, suggests heaven itself; upon it are painted groups of angels singing the thrice holy song.'* The high double chancel arch is decorated with a dog-tooth moulding and is supported each side on thick columns of Bristol blue stone with stiff-leaf capitals. The columns are set on large corbels, two either side, tapering with bands of moulding to a carved leaf boss at the bottom.

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THE CHANCEL ROOF, barrel shaped and boarded, was painted by Heaton, Butler and Bayne, and is a fine example of the Victorian Gothic Revival at its best. The roof extends across the whole chancel, with painted ribs spanning the vault and dividing it into panels, with radiating ribs in the apse. On the soft blue background are painted a profusion of stars of different sizes and shapes, the larger ones moulded and stuck on. There is a central sunburst with the sacred monogram IHS in gold on each panel. A broad band of decoration on a pink background runs the whole way round, each section in the apse having an angel delicately painted and set in a golden oval. Together they hold a curling scroll with the words "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts, Heaven and Earth are full of Thy Glory, Glory be to Thee, O Lord Most High." The other sections at the side have a rose bush motif, set in a quatrefoil and a diamond, with a white rose in each corner and entwined leaves. A decorated border runs along the wall-plate and is repeated along the central ridge.

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THE ORGAN, by Brindley and Foster, is a large organ for a church of this size and is noteworthy in retaining its original tracker action, although an electrical blower has been fitted and further modification is planned. It was installed when the church was built in 1880 and has been in use ever since, having three manuals and a total of 1540 pipes. The oak case was designed by John Hooker.

THE SOUTH WINDOW was made by Clayton and Bell. It has three lancets with a round cinquefoil above. In the central circle is the Virgin Mary, with wings, flanked by two angels holding ribbon scrolls which read: " Now abideth Faith, Hope, Charity these three, but the greatest of these is Charity." The two smaller circles each side have a Seraph with six red wings.

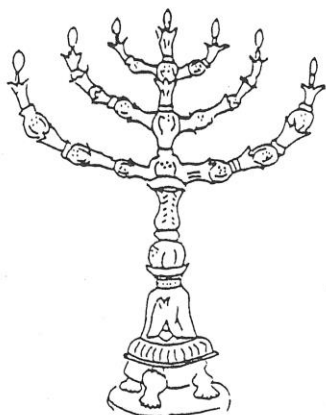
Three large female figures fill the main part of the lancets under an architectural canopy: Faith on the left holds a processional cross and a book; Charity (probably a portrait of the founder's mother) in the centre has a child on each arm and another kneels at her feet; and Hope on the right holds a book and a large anchor rests against her side. Beneath are three lively scenes illustrating the text written below: " I was sick and ye visited me"; "I was thirsty and ye gave me drink"; and "Apply thine heart to understanding."

Below runs a line of six demi-angels, elaborately dressed, with an inscription for each of the three figures: "Fight the good fight of Faith", "The end of the commandment is Charity", and "Hope maketh not ashamed." The colours of this window are particularly glowing.

THE FLOOR is paved throughout with glazed Minton tiles, and in the chancel a rich variety can be seen. The patterned encaustic tiles have a cream design on a terracotta background and are often assembled in fours to make a larger motif, offset with plain black, green and brown tiles. The floor in the sanctuary has a particularly elaborate pattern, forming three large squares each enclosing a lozenge with a central rose, known as a Geometric Pavement, now partially covered by carpet.



THE MENORAHS follow the description of the seven-branched candlesticks in the Tabernacle in Exodus 37. v17, with "Knops, almonds and flowers", though this design seems to be of pomegranates. *The seven-headed candlesticks typify the Church, bright with the sevenfold gift of the Holy Spirit.* Menorahs are extremely unusual in Anglican churches, and these two are a dominant feature of the sanctuary. They were electrified in 1922 'with great difficulty'.



THE REREDOS is of pink alabaster, elaborately carved with three cinquefoil-headed panels inside a rectangular structure. In the centre is the alpha and omega design with the words " Hold fast till I come " beneath; the ten commandments are written on each side, and " This do in remembrance of me" runs along the base. The reredos was not part of the original scheme, being donated in 1888 by the Rev G E Tate, vicar 1880-95

THE EAST WINDOW There are five windows round the apse, each a double lancet with a quatrefoil in a circle above. The stonework round the arches is attractively carved and the arches are supported by the three orders of angelic beings: the two outer windows have angels (two wings), the next two have cherubim (four wings) and the central window has seraphim (six wings as in Isaiah 6.v 2)

The central window above the altar depicts Christ the True Vine on the left, and the Ascended Christ on the right. Above in the head of the arch on the left, a group of kneeling angels with multicoloured wings holds a scroll which reads: " As in Adam all die"; and on the right a similar group hold a scroll reading " So in Christ shall all be made alive." In the quatrefoil above is the Agnus Dei with the Banner of Victory.

The window on the left contains scenes from His birth: The Meeting of Mary and Elizabeth; and the Shepherds and the Angels. The window on the right shows John leading Mary



to his home after the crucifixion, and the two Marys at the tomb. The quatrefoils feature an angel singing alleluia. These three windows were in place at the consecration of the church.

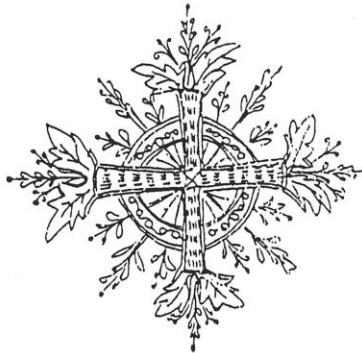
Subsequently the near left window was filled with a scene depicting the theme of Prayer. Across both lights is the Dedication of Solomon's Temple. In the left light are groups of robed figures standing in a temple, in the right light King Solomon kneels in supplication before the Ark of the Covenant. The Veil of the Temple, dark olive fringed with gold, hangs draped from a rail. In the small quatrefoil above the whole Ark can be seen, guarded by two angels, wings meeting above.

The subject of Praise fills the companion window on the right and also stretches across both lights. It depicts the Heavenly Choir (after Fra Angelico), a group of heavenly figures in rich garments with wings and haloes, each with a musical instrument or scroll of music. There are nine figures, and it is believed that the faces are those of the Thompson family. Several have been identified, the short-haired one behind the harp as Henry Percy. Above, in the quatrefoil is an altar bearing a flame. The window was donated by an unnamed friend of the Thompsons, the other windows having been given in memory of earlier members of the family.

The East windows were made by Heaton, Butler and Bayne, and show the high standard of Victorian craftsmanship, which is apparent throughout the Church.

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ALTAR FRONTAL. The church possesses a fine Victorian altar frontal embroidered in gold, green and white, with a central moline cross on a circle with a delicate leaf design, and a floral motif on either side.



List of incumbents:

1878	Rev C R Alford
1880	Rev G E Tate
1895	Rev H P Thompson
1919	Rev C E Cooke
1922	Rev C R E Yates
1942	Rev W J Gray
1952	Rev J F Thornhill
1964	Rev B Beckerleg
1976	Rev J B Lowe
1997	Rev S R Jones
2009	Rev D Kitley

Sources:

South Eastern Gazette, 14 June 1880

H P Thompson - Guidebook, S Mary and S Luke, c 1919

H W Standen - Kippington in Kent, 1958

The NADFAS Record, 1995

Compiled by Keith and Diana Atkinson

