

St. Michael and St. Mary Magdalene

Easthampstead



The original site may have been a “High Place” as it is set on a hill with a Bronze Age barrow nearby at Bill Hill. What can be certain is that Easthampstead parish was given as a gift by Edward the Confessor to Westminster Abbey in or around 1060. It is presumed a Church or small Chapel may have existed at this time, although the population was around 20 adults. The 1000yr old Yew tree at the church gate could be a descendant of an earlier pre-Christian one. Churches on such sites were often dedicated to St. Michael.

The Church is first specifically mentioned in 1159 when Lawrence, the Abbot of Westminster, granted 'the church of “Jezhamstede” to Hurley Priory, a Benedictine priory in the village of Hurley. It was founded in 1086 by the Norman magnate Geoffrey de Mandeville as a cell of Westminster Abbey. In 1159, Lawrence instructed that Hurley should use the income from Easthampstead 'so that they may observe and venerate the Festival of the Blessed Saint Edward the Confessor'.

It is clear from this time the Church was dedicated to St Mary, although later for reasons unknown the name changed at some point in history to St Mary Magdalene.

The Church survived the turbulence of Henry VIII's dissolution of the monasteries (Hurley Priory did not) as well as the Civil War. Somehow, even the Royal Crest was squirrelled away by a Royalist and re-hung in the Church upon the Restoration in 1660.



Rev. Osborne Gordon became Rector in 1860 and he put plans in place to build a new Church, which was done between 1865 and 1867. (His predecessor had knocked down the Rectory and Gordon also had to built its replacement, which he did in 1863. This in its turn was demolished and Point Royal erected in its place!)

The new Church is built over the foundations of its predecessor, except for the tower, built later with Bath Stone, plate tracery and French filigree. The Church was at this time renamed as St Michael and St Mary Magdalene.

Gordon also built a Church School near the Church, and this became the foundation of the present St Michael's CofE School. Also in the 1800s a Workhouse was built opposite the Church (replacing some almshouses) and this became in 1948 Church Hill Hospital.