

A02 INTRODUCTION, BRIEF DESCRIPTION, AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Church Details:

DEDICATION:	St Mary the Virgin
LOCATION:	Church Road, Meppershall, Bedfordshire, SG17 5NA
PARISH LEGAL NAME:	Meppershall
BENEFICE:	Meppershall and Shefford
DEANERY:	Amphill and Shefford
ARCHDEACONRY:	Bedford
DIOCESE:	St Albans
CHURCH OFFICE LOCATION:	None
MAINTENANCE RESPONSIBILITIES:	Building (Generally): Meppershall PCC Chancel (Lay Rector): None (Extent of liability): Not applicable Churchyard (Open): Meppershall PCC
PATRON:	St John's College, Cambridge

2.2 Designations:

STATUTORY LISTING:	Grade II*
LOCAL AUTHORITIES:	Central Bedfordshire Council (Unitary Authority)
GRID REFERENCE:	TL 13458 35924 X: 513458 Y: 235924 Latitude: 52.010162 Longitude: -0.34833983
CONSERVATION AREA:	Meppershall Conservation Area
SCHEDULED MONUMENT:	No (but the churchyard is adjacent to "The Hills" motte and bailey).
TREE PRESERVATION ORDERS:	[Not known]
PROTECTED SPECIES:	Bats
COUNTY WILDLIFE SITE (OR EQUIVALENT, OR SSSI):	[Not known]
ANY OTHER DESIGNATIONS:	[Not known]

2.3 Brief Description of Church

2.4 The church has Norman origins, but has fabric from the C12, C13, and C15, and was significant rebuilding in the late C19.

2.5 **Layout** - This relatively small church consists of a nave, north aisle, south aisle (with the most simple of south porches, crossing tower, north and south transepts, and chancel. The Tower has a ground floor stage, first floor sound deadening chamber, and double height belfry. Liturgical orientation has been used in this description.

2.6 **Materials** - The church appears to be constructed with course ironstone, with ashlar limestone dressings (including Totternhoe Stone, and a Bath Stone). The roofs to Nave and Aisles are in a red clay tile. The Chancel is similar, but still has some white tiles. The Tower and Transepts were originally leaded, but are currently temporarily felted. Windows are mostly glazed with a mix of plain leaded lights (with some tinted glass), though there is some stained-glass. Within, walls are plastered, but largely not limewashed or otherwise painted.



[Meppershall, St Mary the Virgin. General view from the south-west.]

2.7 Historical Background

2.8 Pevsner

2.9 The following has been adapted from Pevsner:

2.10 *St Mary. Of ironstone, with a Norman crossing tower- see the one original s window. But the top of the tower is Perp.*

The crossing arches are in different states of preservation, the best being the w arch with one angle roll. The transepts are Norman too - see the blocked E arches. Can they have led to apsidal chapels? Or do they only represent altar recesses? In the southern one there is indeed now a Perp REREDOS with panels and tracery.

The chancel is early C13, though much renewed. The lancet windows, three stepped ones in the E wall, five originally N and S, are shafted inside. The buttressing outside is still of the flat Norman kind.

Nave and N aisle are by Sir Arthur Blomfield, 1875-6. Three wide bays, so wide that two thin lancets in the clerestory correspond to one bay. The piers are round, and the capitals are not at all strictly E.E. The aisle has an uncommonly steep lean-to roof.

- PLATE. *Two Cups and a Paten, 1673.*

- MONUMENTS. *Brasses to John Meptyshale + 1440 and wife (18 in.) and to John Boteler + 1441 and wife (18½ in.) - Timothy Archer + 1672. Badly done demi-figure, frontal, the usual type for clergymen, and he was vicar here. The top is an open scrolly pediment.*

[Pevsner, Nikolaus, The Buildings of England: Bedfordshire Huntingdon and Peterborough, (Harmondsworth: Penguin 1968).



[Interior. General views: Nave, looking west; and Chancel, looking north-east.]

2.11 Building Listing

2.12 The following has been adapted from the current statutory listing:

2.13 *TL 13 NW MEPPERSHALL CHURCH ROAD 3/61
31.10.66 Church of St Mary the Virgin
GV II**

Parish Church. C12, C13, C15, half rebuilt 1875-6 by Sir Arthur Blomfield. Coursed ironstone, ashlar dressings. Clay tile roofs. Chancel, central tower, N and S transepts, nave, N and S aisles.

Chancel: C13. E elevation has 3 C19 lancets. N and S elevations each retain lancet to E bay, C15 3-centred 3-light window to W bay, and small blocked square-headed window between. S elevation also has C15 4-centred doorway.

Tower: C12. 3 stages, top stage added or rebuilt C15. Round-headed arches to all sides of ground stage, plain except for simple moulding to W side of W arch. N arch partly rebuilt C19. 2nd stage has C12 loop to each side. Top stage has C15 2-light windows to bell-stage. C19 embattled parapet.

Transepts: C12, reworked C15. Each is lit by C15 4-light cinquefoiled window with flat head. N transept now a vestry and organ chamber. S transept E wall rebuilt C15, with a tower staircase included in thickness of wall. C19 embattled parapets.

Nave and aisles: rebuilt 1875-6. 3-bay pointed-arched arcades. Clerestory has 6 pairs of single lights to each side, aisles have 3-light windows under flat heads, 3 to N, 2 to S. S aisle has pointed-arched doorway in slightly projecting gable.

Interior: C15 12-sided font to S aisle. E walls of N and S transepts have altar recesses with 4-centred heads and carved panel decoration, and retaining traces of paint. N one set within blocked semi-circular archway. S transept has brasses to John Meptyshale (d.1440) and wife, and to John Boteler (d.1441) and wife. Chancel wall monuments include polychrome one to Timothy Archer (d.1672), rector. Transept roofs include some C15 work, otherwise roofs and pews are C19.

Listing NGR: TL1345935925

[Historic England Website, December 2018].