

St. Edmund's, Southwold, Suffolk

St Edmund's was built over a period of about 60 years from the 1430s to the 1490s. It replaced an earlier, smaller church that had been destroyed by fire. The earlier church dated from the 13th century, when Southwold was but a fishing hamlet of larger Reydon. But by the 15th century Southwold was an important town, and that is why this church has a municipal feel to it, familiar from Lavenham and Eye.

If we approach from the west, what strikes us first is the amazing flushwork of the tower. Knapped and unknapped flints pick out patterns, textures and designs in stone. Most famously, the curving letters over the west window: SCT. EDMUND ORA P. NOBIS (St Edmund pray for us). Each letter is royally crowned, and set in knapped flints. Whatever must the townsfolk have made of that during the liturgical darkness of the 17th and 18th centuries.

A magnificent and majestic church, large, well proportioned and beautifully maintained. The whole church was rebuilt in the 15th Century and was planned and conceived as a whole under a continuous roof. The exterior is an excellent example of East Anglian flushwork, and the interior is equally splendid. Of particular note is the superb screen with its medieval paintings of angels and saints.