

## *Iron Chest Inside St Michael's Church, Compton Chamberlayne*

### *Information located with the Iron Chest:*

The chest has at some time had considerable force used on it in an endeavour to force it open, the lid being bent in the middle and some of the levers bent and rivets forced out.

The lid is held by 5 spring catches, one on each side, and 3 on the front. Three hooks on the back engage with the back rim of the chest when the lid is closed. This prevents the lid being opened from the back by cutting the hinges.

The real keyhole is on the lid in the centre and covered by a rosette. When the rosette is turned aside and lifted, the keyhole proper is exposed.

The ornamental leaves which cover some of the iron levers are engraved. Also they seem to be of a different metal (or are plated with some different metal to prevent them rusting). Some are superfluous and are only there for ornament, or as a maker's pattern mark; there is no date or other marking to be seen.

On the outside the rivet heads are in the form of a rosette. Inside, on the left, is a metal box riveted to the body with a spring catch to the lid but no lock.

On the right hand side is a type of shepherd's crook, evidently for preventing the lid from closing accidentally.

A hole in the centre of the bottom of the chest, no doubt to be used to bolt the chest to the floor.

In all, it is a most interesting example of locksmith work.

This chest is evidently one of the Armada type iron strong boxes, which although called Armada chests, have not the slightest connection with Armada. They were made in Flanders, Germany and Austria, during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and imported into this country at a fixed rate of duty.



*Iron Chest at St Michael's Church, Compton Chamberlayne –Photo courtesy of Neil MacDougall*