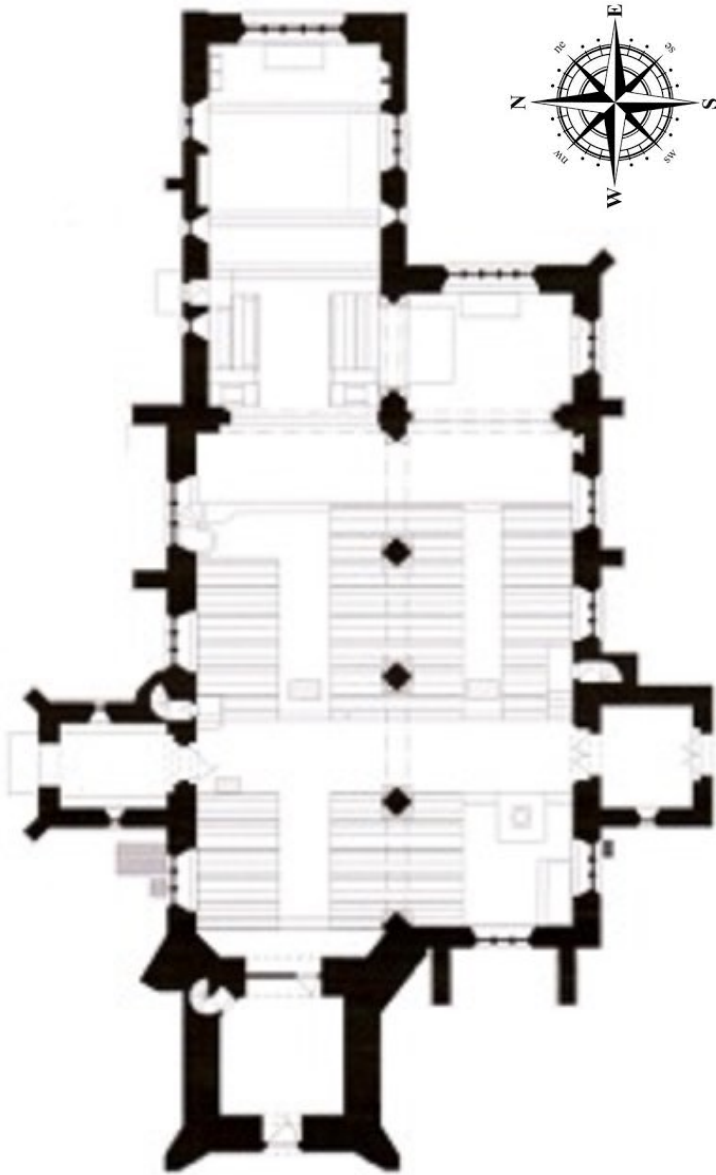


A Brief Guide to the Church of St. Mary the Virgin, Hawkesbury





Introduction

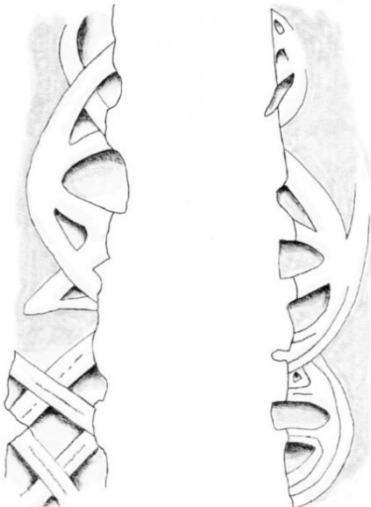
One can hardly imagine a more peaceful or delightful place than St. Mary's Church, Hawkesbury. It is an ancient church, enshrining in Cotswold stone a thousand years of English craftsmanship created for the worship of God.

This short guide is designed to give visitors an insight into the history and architecture of the Church and its setting within the Cotswold landscape.

The Parish

The Church at Hawkesbury is thought to have been founded during the period 675 to 800AD, although no precise records survive to confirm this.

However, some re-used stonework fragments in St. Mary's would seem to support the existence of a Saxon stone building on the site from an even earlier date.



Sketches of Saxon carved work now built into the shaft of the pulpit

The earliest documentary evidence of a church at Hawkesbury is a Charter of 972, in which King Edgar ('The Peaceful' 843-975 AD) confirmed land and privileges to Pershore Abbey, including an estate of 40 hides in 'Suthstoce' (South Stoke, the present Hawkesbury), Hillesley, Tresham, Kilcott, Oldbury-on-the-Hill, Didmarton, Badminton and Upton (Hawkesbury Upton). The Domesday Book confirmed that Pershore held the Manor of Hawkesbury at the time of Edward the Confessor, although by then Oldbury-on-the-Hill and Didmarton were no longer part of the parish. The remaining hamlets continued as a single parish for many centuries.

Hawkesbury became the Mother Church of a large parish in the Diocese of Worcester, with Badminton, Hillesley and Tresham each having a chapel-of-ease, though gradually they became separate parishes with their own churches.

The current parish boundary - over thirty miles in length - still follows much of the original 972 delineation.

The Benedictines of Pershore established a manorial centre with a staff of clergy and lay brothers drawn from their number. They were based in the priest's house to the east of the Church, with service buildings to the north and west.

In 1102 the abbot granted to his monks the produce of the manor 'for the augmentation of their kitchen and to provide clothing' – 'agricultural produce, fish from the ponds and wool from the abbey's flocks of sheep'.

St. Wulfstan

The most distinguished of all the incumbents of the Church at Hawkesbury was St. Wulfstan (c.1008 -1095), renowned in his long life for his humility, faith, learning and sanctity.

He served as a priest at the Saxon Church at Hawkesbury after his ordination, probably as a member of a small community of clergy. At the time, Hawkesbury belonged to Pershore Abbey.

William of Malmesbury recounts that whilst in Hawkesbury, Wulfstan was distracted from prayer by the smell of roasting goose in the priest's house next door. Appalled by this lapse, he gave up meat for the rest of his life, and is now revered as the patron saint of vegetarians.

Wulfstan returned to Worcester where he became First Monk or Dean and was subsequently elected Bishop of Worcester at the Easter Assembly of 1062.

Wulfstan laid the foundations for the great medieval cathedral at Worcester, the priory at Great Malvern, Hereford Cathedral and Tewkesbury Abbey. He also did great service to this country by helping to suppress the slave traffic between Bristol and Ireland.

Wulfstan was a confidant of Harold Godwinson and after the Norman Conquest of 1066, helped to smooth the transition between the old and the new regimes. One of only three Saxon bishops to remain in office after the Conquest and the purge of 1070, Wulfstan was well thought of by William 1st and William 2nd.

Wulfstan died in 1095 after 33 years as Bishop of Worcester and was canonised by Pope Innocent III on 14th May 1203.

St. Wulfstan was buried at Worcestershire Cathedral and there is a well-trodden pilgrim path between Worcester Cathedral and St. Mary's Hawkesbury.

In 2011 three stained glass roundels were installed in the north-west window of St. Mary's, commemorating Wulfstan's life.



The Manor of Hawkesbury

The Manor of Hawkesbury is mentioned in the Domesday Book, and continued in the hands of Pershore Abbey until its dissolution in 1539, when the property passed to the Crown. In 1546 the Manor was sold to the Boteler (or Butler) family. It is the Butlers who were probably responsible for raising the roof, re-roofing and re-fenestrating of the Church Nave in the sixteenth century.

From 1610 to 1621 the Manor belonged to Arthur Crewe of Hillesley who sold it to Robert Jenkinson, a descendant of Sir Anthony Jenkinson of Bristol who sailed with Sebastian Cabot.

Robert Jenkinson was the son of Sir Anthony Jenkinson of Queen Elizabeth I's reign, famous for his four diplomatic and commercial expeditions to Russia between 1558 and 1571.

The Jenkinson family held the manor of Hawkesbury for 400 years until 2016, when the estate was purchased from the Lord of the Manor (Sir John Jenkinson) by the 11th Duke of Beaufort.

In 1770 Sir Banks Jenkinson, the 6th baronet, lent the manor to his cousin Charles, later the 1st Earl of Liverpool (1729-1808), so that he could bring his young wife Amelia to the country for a change of air after the birth of their son. Sadly, she died during the journey from London and is buried in the Church.

Below the Chancel is a vault where ten members of the Jenkinson family are buried. Burials took place at the Church until the Jenkinsons built St. George's Church next to their estate at Falfield, Gloucestershire, in 1880.

Charles Jenkinson, 7th Baronet became, successively, Lord of the Admiralty, Lord of the Treasury in 1767, and in 1778 the Secretary at War under Lord North. In 1786 he became Baron Hawkesbury and in 1796 was created 1st Earl of Liverpool.

As Lord Hawkesbury and a leading member of governments in the reign of George III, Charles Jenkinson gave his name to the Hawkesbury River in New South Wales, Australia, the town of Hawkesbury in Ontario, Canada, a town in Nova Scotia, an island off the coast of British Columbia and Hawkesbury Point in North Territory, Australia. The clipper ship Hawkesbury, built in 1868, worked the Australian wool trade route and was named after him.

Charles Jenkinson's memorial, by Richard Westmacott, listing his forty years of service in public office, is on the south wall of the Chancel.

The most distinguished member of the Jenkinson family was Charles' and Amelia's son, Robert Banks Jenkinson, 2nd Earl of Liverpool KG, MP, (1770-1828) Prime Minister of Great Britain from 1812 to 1827 and the third longest-serving of all British prime ministers.

In 1801 he became Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and later Secretary of State for War and the Colonies under Spencer Perceval (1809). Following the assassination of Perceval in 1812, he became Prime Minister, and remained in post throughout the rest of the Napoleonic Wars, the War of 1812 with the United States, the Congress of Vienna and the period of domestic political instability following 1815.



Robert Banks Jenkinson, by Sir Thomas Lawrence P.R.A. – Private collection

Robert Banks Jenkinson is buried beneath the Chancel floor and two heraldic banners bearing his arms encircled by his Garter Ribbon survive in the Church.



One of the Heraldic Banners of Robert Banks Jenkinson, 2nd Earl of Liverpool KG, MP

The Churchyard



The Churchyard is roughly oval in shape and is planted with a yew hedge forming a continuous band around the eastern boundary, which is divided into large blocks along the north and west. The outer walls on the north and west and along the south western section, are of local limestone dry stone walling, and near to the northern gate they are capped with the remains of broken gravestones.

The Churchyard shows signs of long use, with a considerable rise in level towards the south east corner. The drop from ground level to the base of the church plinth is around four feet, a deep drain having been made around the Church during the nineteenth century.

There is no churchyard cross left standing. A site of this age might be expected to have had a preaching cross in the Churchyard, most likely to the south east of the Church. Interestingly there is a flat stone with a circular centre section just visible at ground level in this area. Only excavation would show whether this was a gravestone or the top of a plinth belonging to a larger cross.

The Churchyard contains one hundred and seventy standing monuments, of which eighty-seven are chest tombs. The local Cotswold stone, particularly the finer oolitic limestone, lends itself to carving and many of the monuments have extravagant detail carved in high relief. Unfortunately, the stone also tends to be easily eroded, and fifty-seven monuments, some of which still retain handsome swag and foliage ornament in reasonable detail, are now unreadable.



The oldest legible monuments stand on the path to the old parsonage, to the north east of the chancel. Here, set as a pair, are the tombs of Ion (John) and Elner (Eleanor) Cooper (see photo). They are comparatively small chest tombs, with very thick ledger stones (top slabs) mounted on narrow bases, with toothed decoration around the inscriptions. Ion 'once minister of this place' died 20 December 1644 and Elner his wife died a few months later, 5 May 1645, aged 88.



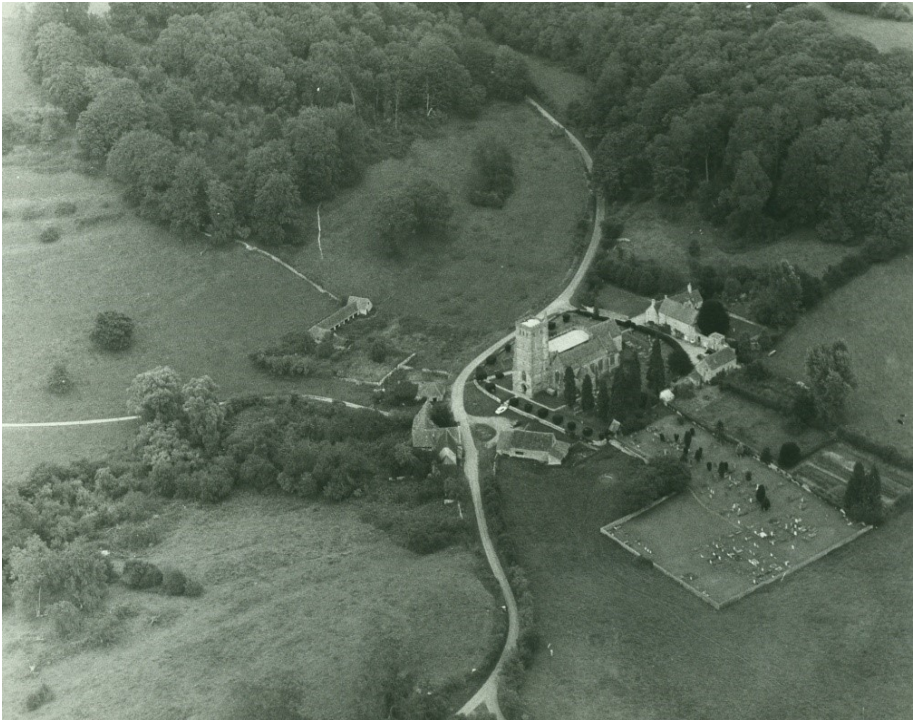
Lists of burials in the Churchyard are kept in the Church and registers of baptisms, marriages and burials exist in unbroken succession from the year 1603. Some of the entries are of unusual interest.

The list of burials for the year 1679 begins: "All these following were buried in woollen according to a late act of parliament. entitled an act for burying in woollen and to begin ye 1 of Aug. 1678."

The purpose of this Act of Parliament was to encourage the wool trade and made it compulsory that every corpse should be buried in wool and an affidavit to that effect had to be made at each burial.

In 1881 a cemetery was opened to the south of the Churchyard which was extended in 1938. This cemetery continues to serve the Parish and is administered by Hawkesbury Parish Council.

An aerial photograph c.1960, showing the Cemetery to the south of the Church.



The Exterior of the Church

The Church can be divided into three conventional sections:

The **Chancel** is predominantly Early English in style (circa 1145-1272 AD), with some later windows inserted. A priest's door, with a typically sixteenth century head to the arch, and a later door hood, has been inserted at the western end of the chancel.

The large **Nave**, now distinctly Perpendicular (circa 1377-1509) in outline, and fronted on its north side by a large two storey porch, houses Perpendicular windows in a much older wall. It is possible that this wall is from the 12th century. This links with 12th century metalwork recovered from the previous north door, still kept in the north porch priest's room.

There are also signs that the wall was rendered - a normal feature of medieval stone buildings. This may have been necessary after the insertion of the new windows, and the raising of the wall to accommodate a clerestory (the upper line of windows) in the early 16th century, in order to hide the joins between old and new masonry. Renovation in later years is commemorated just below the north-east nave window (ER 1710) above a patch of newer masonry.

The earlier porch (although not the earliest door) is on the south side of the Nave. An Early English floriated coffin cover, re-used as a wall stone, is set in the eastern side of the door. This would originally have been set flush to the ground inside the Church, but was recycled in the 14th century when the porch was built.

Such rapid re-use of older stones was not uncommon and here it may indicate that the Church floor was renovated or altered at the time the porch was built.



Above the coffin cover, on the same side of the door, are two pre-Reformation scratch dials. Scratch dials were simple forms of sundial in which a central gnomon cast a shadow on regularly incised lines, when the shadow touched a line it was time to say Mass. The dials were often re-cut in an attempt to improve their accuracy – hence the second dial. An 18th century sundial is set above the south porch door.

The north Porch is partly Early English and partly Perpendicular. Over the outer doorway were once two niches, but some years ago they were walled up. The Porch is lit by two narrow openings on the ground floor and three more generous windows on the first floor, and is equipped with a drain for the upper storey and a chimney concealed by a small ornament on the nave wall above.

The Tower has a base and West door of Early English work rising into a square tower with a Perpendicular west window. A spirelet was added over the south-east stair turret in the 19th century.

Around the top of the crenelated tower are fine but heavily weathered gargoyles and hunky punks.



Signs of previous extensions to the Church, now demolished, can be found in the corner between the tower and the south porch, where a projecting drip moulding indicates the former presence of either a door or small annex in that corner. Further along the south wall, a similar drip moulding high on the wall shows the position of the demolished external rood stair. The rood (a figure of the crucified redeemer) was on top of the (since removed) oak screen separating the Chancel from the Nave.

The Interior of the Church

On entering the north porch, the pillars on either side of the oak door are Romanesque, a stylistic period dating from AD 600 to 1200, and show signs of having been dismantled and reassembled.



The main sections of the pillars consist of two unusual, single, unjointed, shafts of uneven length. These are topped with cushion capitals (a typically Norman design) of equal size. The unequal bases both appear to be reused capitals. The one to the west is another cushion capital, inverted, and that to the east - although much battered - appears to be a reused bulbous capital and is more typically Saxon.

The re-use of stone in the early medieval period was a matter of piety as well as convenience, stone from a dismantled chapel or church would be re-used in its new counterpart. The stones in the north doorway are, therefore, unlikely to have come from anywhere other than the doorway of the previous church building. However, the mixture of styles suggests that the old church may have already seen at least two phases of building before the more complete rebuild.

To the west of the door is a mutilated holy water stoup (vessel). The date of the damage is unknown, but may have been associated with the reformation in the late sixteenth century, when large numbers of altars and sculptures were removed or defaced in churches across England.

Above the north porch is a small room accessed by a stair on the north wall of the nave. This served as a priest's room and later as a schoolroom and contains the ancient parish chest with its three padlocks - one each for the vicar and two churchwardens. There are benches against the walls, an oak table - which may be the 17th century communion table of the Church - and iron hinges from the early north door



The Nave.

It is likely that the original building on the site was situated towards the rear of the present nave and was demolished and rebuilt on a much larger scale in the 12th century. The enlarged church had a steeply pitched roof ending on lower walls than the current nave. The old roof line can clearly be seen on the west wall.

The north wall of the nave is the oldest remaining complete elevation in the building and is of a largely rubble construction, with later windows inserted which makes it difficult to date. However, its thickness and the surviving metalwork from the earlier north door support the suggestion of a 12th century build.

The arcade of four bays and south aisle was developed much later in the 14th and 15th centuries and removed almost all traces of the earlier south wall. A small blocked opening can be seen in the highest part of the wall. The present tie beam nave roof is a 19th century replacement of the original 16th century structure.

In the middle of the north wall window nearest the door there are fragments of early stained glass discovered and reinstalled (some reversed) during the nineteenth century refurbishment. They include parts of at least two heads - none of which provides an intact picture, although one fragment shows a deer struck by an arrow – often attributed to St Giles.

On the top arch of the next window is a fragment of wall painting, which would have been used all over the Church prior to the Reformation.



The Pulpit.

Under the window nearest the Chancel arch in the north nave wall is an octagonal pulpit showing very fine 15th century stonework. Stone pulpits of this date are rare - Arthur Mee (1875 – 1943) an English writer, journalist and educator) stated that 'it is one of the small group of about 60 stone medieval pulpits left in England' and its base shaft includes re-used Saxon interlaced work almost certainly part of a Saxon cross shaft.



The Chancel.

To the east is the Chancel Arch which has been widened at some stage thus losing much of its balance and strength. The north wall consequently bows outwards and has been reinforced by heavy external buttressing.



A series of steps lead up to the Sanctuary, accommodating both the rise in ground level and the urge of later builders to set



chancels and sanctuaries on a higher level than naves and congregations.

From the date on one of the gravestones overlain by the topmost step, the flight was completed in the second half of the 19th century - probably in 1882 to 1885, when the Church was restored.

During restoration work a defaced Easter Sepulchre was revealed when plaster was removed. In Medieval times the Easter Sepulchre was the centre of solemn ritual – on Maundy Thursday two hosts were consecrated and placed in the Sepulchre. On Good Friday one was used for Mass and the other placed in the niche on the Altar. Early on Easter Day this host was figuratively placed in a tomb and replaced in the niche in the Altar. It is not known whether this structure was originally a tomb, or (more likely) purpose built when the Church was extended.



The east window is early Perpendicular in style replacing a lancet group of which traces can still be seen. The number of lancets cannot be determined from the surviving evidence – it may have been five but three was more usual.

In the south-east corner of the Chancel is a very fine double piscina which can be dated to the last quarter of the 13th century, when it was decreed that Mass vessels could not be rinsed into the same drain as that used for disposing of the left-over consecrated wine.



In addition, there are the remains of small brackets for a credence shelf (A small shelf, which, in medieval times, was used for the storage of bread and wine before consecration) within the arch over the piscina. By the start of the 14th century, a single piscina was once again acceptable, as can be seen in the slightly later chapel in the South chancel.

On the Chancel walls are monuments to the Jenkinson family including Robert Banks Jenkinson, 2nd Earl of Liverpool, Prime Minister 1812-1827.

There is also a stained-glass window memorial to Captain John Banks Jenkinson of the Rifle Brigade, who was killed at Aisne on 14th September 1914.

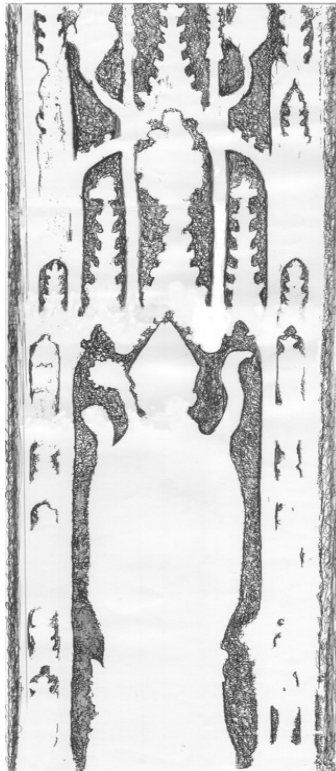


In the north-east corner of the chancel is a small cherub head in very high relief set in with modern mortar. This is a scrap of tombstone which was recorded by Ralph Bigland in the eighteenth century as being in the Churchyard. It has the

inscription “(here li)yeth bodies ... May and of E.. (W)ife who depar(ted)..” Ralf Bigland’s record confirms the names as Peter and Elizabeth May.

A number of flat gravestones are set into the floor of the Chancel. These include members of the Thynne family, as well as Amelia, mother of Robert Banks Jenkinson.

The most remarkable stone in the Sanctuary floor is a huge slab, eleven feet long, against the Chancel wall at the eastern end.



Clearly, it was once inlaid with brass, although all that remains now are the rivets and the recess in which the brass was set.

The outline shows a mitred figure, holding a crosier with a rounded and knopped head, and the outline of a possible dedicatory scroll at shoulder level. The top half of the slab is in the form of window tracery.

From the style of the robes indicated, it is likely to be late 14th or early 15th century (later clerics were depicted in Mass vestments). It is impossible to tell if he is a Bishop or an Abbot. If he is an Abbot then, since the Abbots of Pershore were all mitred, it is almost certainly the tomb of Thomas Upton. He was Rector of Hawkesbury after retirement from Pershore Abbey - he was elected Abbot in 1379 and drowned in the River Severn in 1413.



A wooden lectern in the form of an eagle stands at the south-western corner of the chancel. It is possible that the lectern is medieval, although the base appears to have been replaced. The form of an eagle, the swiftest and highest flying of birds, bearing the Word of God was very popular at this time.

The Chalkley Chancel.

To the south of the main body of the Church is the Chalkley Chancel, established by the Stinchcombe family in 1452 and funded as a chantry chapel by income from land at Chalkley, in the east of the Parish. When the Chantry Cult was suppressed in 1529 the Chancel became part of the side aisle and is now referred to as the Lady Chapel.



On the Tympanum above this chancel arch are the remains of what would have been a traditional Doom Painting, almost invariably found behind a rood. Doorways to a now-demolished staircase to the rood-loft can be seen in the south wall.

The current east window is in the Decorated style (circa 1272-1377), and has a dedication on a brass plaque below it: “To Marianne Catharine Boothby who departed this life Dec 22nd 1884 aged 84 years of age and whose mortal remains lie at Algarkirk in the county of Lincoln. This window was placed here and this chapelry restored by her son and grand-daughter William Henry and Antonia Rafaela Boothby”.

William Henry Boothby, the son of Marianne, was Vicar of St. Mary’s from 1849-1892. The arch-braced roof shows signs of having had a ceiling attached. There are further wall monuments along the south and west walls.

There are three baptismal fonts in St Mary’s – the one in current



use is at the western end of the south Aisle and is of octagonal

Jacobean design. It has an octagonal bowl with recessed panels containing lozenges in relief.

A further octagonal font - no longer in use - stands by the Vestry door.

The octagon shape, often used for fonts and pulpits, was popular from the earliest Christian buildings as a link between the solid square of the earth and the perfect circle of heaven.

The third is thought to be an ancient Norman font which is in the Chancel. This is 8 feet in circumference and is round in shape. It was discovered in a garden in Hawkesbury Upton by Reverend J Millar.

In the south-west corner a large carved and painted chest tomb surrounded by railings reads: "Dedicated to the memory of Edward Cosyn Esq. of Hillsley, in this Parish, Lord of the Manor of Charley in the county of Leicester, who departed this Life the 20th Day of February, Anno Dom. 1689, *aetatis suae* 88 who married Frances, eldest daughter of William Try, Esq. of Hardwick in the County".

On the west Wall of the south Aisle is a memorial to the Rev. Potter Cole, vicar of the parish for a remarkable 73 years, who died in 1802 at the age of 97 after 'constant practice of every Christian duty'. Slate memorials bearing the initials of his children are inserted into the floor below his memorial. Beside the Vestry screen is a wooden sign board, which was previously fixed above the north porch door, ordering respectful behaviour from parishioners.

The Tower

At the west end of the Church is the Tower, to which there is no regular public access. The Tower contains a 14th century bell and medieval three-pit bell frame in a very good state of preservation.

The Bells


There is a first-floor ringing chamber, with a fireplace, in the Tower although the single bell is chimed from the floor of the Vestry. The ground floor door to the tower stairs has been renovated on the outside, but would appear, on the reverse, to be the original timber.



St. Mary's Church has always had bells to call the faithful to services and to signal both happy and sad occasions. The bell frame, which is still in the Tower, dates from the 14th century and is one of the best preserved in the country. It was built for five bells but four of them were removed in the past probably by the Boteler (or Butler) family.

From the shape of the beams of the bell frame it is thought that there were four bells on the south side of the tower and a very large tenor on the north side of the tower. The tenor bell may well have been over a ton in weight and was probably one of the largest in the country at the time.

It now contains only one bell which was rehung by the Whitechapel Foundry in 1975 and was converted from wheel operation to chiming at the same time.

The bell is 36"/30 1/2" and weighs 9cwt. tuned to A natural with an Iroko headstock – the original headstock is preserved in the Tower along with a 14th century bell clapper. The Bell has the inscription  Sancta Maria.

The Church currently has an electronic broadcast peal which is used for celebrations and services.

You join us at an exciting time in the Church's history as we are about to install a new peal of eight bells in the Tower. These bells will be installed below the existing bell frame because it is listed and cannot be moved.

Restoration, 1882-5

In common with many country parish churches in England, St. Mary's received little attention to its fabric after repairs in 1699, but was the subject of substantial restoration in the 1880s under the supervision of the London architect William Wood Bethell (1848/9-1909), at a cost of £2,400. In his initial report of 19th January 1882, Wood Bethel described St. Mary's as "one of the most important churches in the neighbourhood and in every respect a fine example of a village church architecture... extremely interesting to the archaeologist".

He found the nave roof in dangerous condition and the plaster of the walls rotting with damp. He recommended a new roof and stripping all the walls and ceilings of plaster and paint. Of the fittings, he found them "of the very highest importance ... composed of good old oak of the Jacobean period. They consist of high pews of various shapes in the nave, aisles and chancel; a curious arrangement of altar-rails and some panelling"

However, owing to their condition, only the pews in the nave were kept and cut down to their present form. New choir stalls were made, windows re-glazed, new drainage created around the Church, and new heating installed.

Other Restorations to the Church

Funds were raised in 1897 for a new organ.

Since 1977 the Church has been supported by The Friends of St. Mary's, which has regularly raised funds for the care and conservation of the ancient fabric of the Church.

In recent years the glazing and ironwork of all the windows have been cleaned and conserved, a new south door provided and new altar-frontals and kneelers have been made by members of the parish.

In 2009 four Altar frontals from St. Mary's were restored by a group of needlewomen from the National Association of Fine Arts. They were rededicated to His Grace the Bishop of Gloucester the Right Reverend Michael Perham.



Around St. Mary's

St. Mary's Church is situated below the Cotswold escarpment in a tranquil valley in what was an area called Hawkesbury Stoke. It was distinct from Hawkesbury Upton, a settlement on the higher ground above. However, in earlier times the two settlements were connected by small dwellings running down the hill from Upton, all of which have now gone but platforms of nine houses have been discovered. They may have disappeared during and after the agricultural depression of the late nineteenth century and following the First World War, when many village populations were severely depleted.

In front of the Church stood the Manor House, probably dating from the 16th or early 17th century, with its courts and walled gardens, an estate carpenter's shop, a saw-pit, barn and fishponds.



There was also a farmhouse to the West of the Church, which had originally been built around 1500 as a church house, at which time it contained storage rooms for materials for mending the Church and accommodation for homeless villagers. On the first floor a large room for secular assemblies was intended to raise funds for the repair of the Church (Church Ales) or for wedding breakfasts for brides unable to raise their own funds (Bride Ales), for the Clerk's wages ('Clerk-Ales') and wakes following funerals.

A separate bakehouse and brewhouse stood a little distance from the Church House in order to reduce the danger of fire, and later (circa 1550) a large malt house for brewing beer was attached.

Between these buildings and two neighbouring farms is the Parish Pound, where loose animals were harboured until owners paid a fine for their release. The village of Hawkesbury Upton has its own Pound opposite the Plain.

To the north of the Church is a steep hill, known as the Knoll, from which the visitor can see into the far distance – towards the Malvern Hills northwards, the Mendips to the south and across the River Severn towards the Black Mountains in Wales. There is evidence of an early, probably neo-lithic long barrow here.

Higher up the Knoll stands the splendid monument to Lord Robert Edward Somerset (1776-1842), designed by Lewis Vulliamy (1781-1871) erected in 1846.

Lord Robert, a younger son of the 5th Duke of Beaufort, was a distinguished soldier who served Wellington both in the Peninsular Campaigns and at Waterloo, where he commanded the Household Cavalry Brigade.

Around the slopes of the Knoll, and the bowl-shaped valley to the north of the hill described as a 'pastoral amphitheatre', are clearly visible remains of lynchets or lynchets - strips of land each measuring a furlong in length ploughed by teams of oxen for growing crops. Regular turning of the plough created terraces of more level land for medieval and later tenants and these have not been obliterated by modern deeper ploughing.



The next promontory to the north is called Gallows Hill, indicating it as the place of execution for felons who had been tried in the court-room of what is now Court Farm near to the Church. To the North West there was once a deer park and traces of its Park Pale (a ditch and an earthwork bank topped by wooden palings) still survive but the park was probably enclosed for farm use by

he 16th century. To the south lies Church Hill, on the top of which is an Iron-Age long barrow.

To the west - stretching for miles - is a surviving part of the royal medieval forest of Kingswood which is now managed as a nature reserve by the Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust. Known now as Lower Woods it consists of about 700 acres (284ha) in both the parishes of Hawkesbury and Horton. Bisected by the Little Avon River and bounded by stretches of open common land for grazing animals, it is one of the largest areas of ancient woodland in the south-west of England.

Some of Lower Woods and adjacent parts of Inglestone Common are designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest and are significant for thier ancient woodland (never having been totally cleared by man), standing oaks, hazel coppices and wide trenches. Clear spaces stretching through the woodland for drainage and for hunting. Many paths through the woods are accessible to visitors and information about it is available on its website.

The rich woodland flowers and plants here include carpets of bluebells in spring, early purple orchids, greater butterfly orchids and herb Paris. In the summer old meadow species include ragged-robin, common-spotted orchids, betony and devil's-bit scabious. Butterflies include white admiral and silver washed fritillary. Lower Woods has been described as 'an inviolate patch of country whose continuity between human and the natural, and between the successive ages of human occupation is less smudged than elsewhere in the south'. The description could well apply to the whole settlement and church of Hawkesbury.

This guide was designed and produced by the Friends of St. Mary's, Hawkesbury

To join the Friends of St Mary's or to donate towards the maintenance of this beautiful Church please email or telephone:

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