

St Mary the Virgin

The History and Architecture

Church Lane
Marden
Hereford
HR1 3EN



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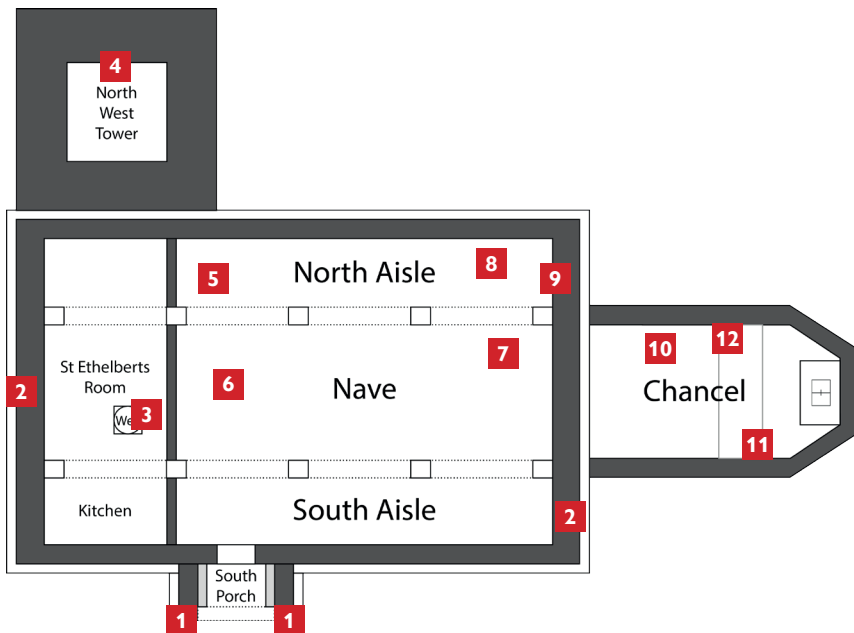


Photo left: *The church in Spring 2015*

The parish church of St Mary the Virgin is a Grade 1 listed (circa 1220) stone building sitting on the east bank of the River Lugg. The church owes its existence to an episode in AD794 when King Ethelbert of the East Angles made an ill-fated trip to Marden expecting to marry the daughter of King Offa (see *The Ethelbert Story*). As a consequence of this the church became a centre of pilgrimage during the middle ages and this is believed to account for the unusually large building serving a small rural population.

The church measures approx. 22 by 10 metres (excluding the bell tower)

The church is accessed via the south porch on either side of which are the carved heads of St Ethelbert and Pope Adrian.

On entering the church to your left you will find a small kitchen area leading to a modern staircase. This provides access to a gallery which offers an additional seating area and a good view through the church to the altar at the far east end.

Leading off from the kitchen area is St Ethelbert's room - the vestry. In here is St Ethelbert's well, believed to be the site where Ethelbert's headless corpse was dumped. It is said that a column of light appeared over this spot, together with a miraculous spring which attracted pilgrims down the centuries.

From St Ethelbert's room you can return to the nave where you will find the popular church library to your left and the 13th / 14th century font to your right.

Walking down the centre aisle you will arrive at the 19th century pulpit and behind that, to the right of the new organ, a modern benefactors' window that was installed in 2013. This recognises the major donors for the church roof replacement project of 2010. In 2016 it is expected to also include the major benefactors of the restored bells and bell tower.

Photo: *Pulpit in the church*





Photo: 1895 stained glass window

Looking above the vestry you can see a lovely stained glass window installed in 1895. In the south east corner of the nave is another stained glass window, dedicated to The Revd D E Rowlands, vicar here from 1914 to 1936.

In 1857 the church was in a dilapidated state. T Nicholson Esq. rebuilt the nave and aisles in 1858 from old materials to reduce cost.

The early 14th century chancel was restored in 1865 under the direction of William Chick, clerk of works to the Cathedral architect. The restoration work was awarded to Mr Bevan for £90. The chancel roof is probably 17th century and the chancel floor was raised (assumed due to flood risk) in 1878.



Photo: Window dedicated to Revd D E Rowlands

The chancel used to house a pipe organ made around 1880-90 by T S Jones of London, Damaged during the flood of 2007 it was replaced by a modern organ in the nave and now resides in a French chateau.

The east end of the chancel has an unusual feature; it has a polygonal shaped apse, believed to be of French influence. In the south wall is a recess, known as a pescina. This was used in the early days for washing the sacramental vessels. In the north wall is a priest's door which is no longer in use.



Photo: The chancel in 2015



Photo: The nave (Mike Steadman)



Photo: The priest's door