

# St Mary the Virgin

## Staunton-on-Wye

Staunton on  
Wye, Hereford  
HR4 7NE

The church has a splendid situation on a rise at the end of the village with an extensive view to the south over the apple orchards of Monnington to the winding of the river Wye.

The porch has a Norman doorway with capitals and details of the arch indicate 12<sup>th</sup> century. The tower has no buttresses under a large pyramid rood. In this tower are bell openings circa 1300, but above the Victorian doorway is what could be a re-set doorway of about a century earlier. The massive widened arch of the 13<sup>th</sup> C still has its medieval roof of stout timber. There used to be a little gallery with Elizabethan and Jacobean panelling. In the gallery were six wooden medallions depicting men and women; one woman with a key of a flower in her mouth. These were long in the vestry; but were removed by thieves in 1992. One of the set was returned to the vicar anonymously in a package sent from Tasmania. The whereabouts of the others is unknown.



All that remains of the old roof of the nave is a rib ending in a grotesque head. One Norman lancet window and two Norman doorways (one blocked) still exist. Two arches on an enormous capital on the North side tell of a 14<sup>th</sup> C Chapel demolished in the 18<sup>th</sup> C when the Chancel was re-built; and later Victorianised. However Pevsner thinks that the enormity and crudity of the capital indicate 11<sup>th</sup>C.

The plain stone font is 700 years old. The altar table is Jacobean, as is a communion rail with turned balusters. Two armchairs are made from old panelling. There are Victorian era tiles and painting on the east wall. Banners of the Mothers' Union and the British Legion stand each side of the altar.

The organ has a hand pump but has been electrified. It was moved to its present site in 1977. Further west, beneath the tower, is the organ and a small open area, leading to the access staircase for the bell tower.

The set of bells which often ring out over the Countryside was cast in 1763 by William Evans of Chepstow; re-hung in 1873 by White's of Appleton, then tuned and re-hung in 1957 by Taylor of Loughborough. They bear the inscriptions:

Treble	"Come let us ring to God and King. W. E. 1763"
Second	"Prosperity to this Parish. W. E. 1763"
Third	"Peace and good neighbourhood. W. E. 1763"
Fourth	"We were all cast by Wm. Evans at Chepstow. 1763"
Fifth	"Mr Mansell Powell, Mr Geo. Harris. Churchwardens. W. E. 1763"
Tenor	"Let my sound move thee to God's glory. W.E. 1763"

In the ringing chamber is a wooden plaque recording that on Easter Monday, April 17, 1876 were rung 720 changes of Kent Treble Bob Minor, 720 Grandsire Minor also several six score of



Grandsire and Stedman Doubles by.....this is notable in that G H Phillpott was a founder member and the first Ringing Master of the Hereford Guild (1886-1890).

Monuments inside the church include a tablet to the memory of George Jarvis; the great benefactor of the parishes of Letton, Bredwardine and Staunton.

Outstanding efforts by a group of villagers are proving their worth as you walk around the circular churchyard. The grass is neatly mown; ancient graves (some with interesting and touching inscriptions) are kept tidy. Wild flowers grow in profusion in their season. A notable monument (much weathered) is a stone effigy of a Lady lying under a canopy. This is thought to be early 14<sup>th</sup> C, but there is no clue to her identity.

In the last decade part of the western end of the nave was cleared of pews and the floor tiled to provide a gathering space. A toilet has been installed as well as a simple catering unit. The church was closed in 2018 after a fall of plaster and then underwent an ambitious refurbishment project with major repairs made to the walls and roof. The church was re-opened early in 2021.