

This concludes your tour of St Mary's Church.

You are welcome to explore the rest of the exterior, the churchyard and the memorials.



Text of this tour guide by Sue Bruten

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## A Walk Through St. Mary's Church



St. Mary's Church

Church Rd

Yate

BS37 5BG

## The Early Church at Yate

The village of Yate developed around an entrance or gate into the King's Forest. (Ye Gate became the word Yate.) A Saxon Charter of 778 records confirmation by Offa, King of the Mercians and Aldred Under-King of Hwicca of the grant to Worcester Abbey of 10 'mansiones' in 'Gete' It is believed Gete or Geate was the Saxon name for gap into the King's Wood which extended to Yate and beyond. Kingswood in Bristol reminds us of the vast lands and forests belonging to the Crown which stretched from Worcestershire.

Although no evidence remains it is most likely that a place of worship would have been established at this time.

The Domesday Book in 1086 records the Church of Worcester holding 50 hides in Huesberie (Westbury on Trym] which included land at 'Gete' (parish church, dedicated to St Mary the Virgin). There has been a church on this site for more than 1000 years. The first recorded evidence of a parish church, dedicated to St. Mary the Virgin comes with the Norman period and there have been many changes to the church throughout the centuries.

On leaving the porch, turn left and look at the outside wall of the South Transept. On the corner  is a scratch dial which was used to tell the time for the services as most people could not tell time.



Further along the side of the Church there is a niche above the priest's door containing a medieval angel holding another mass  (scratch) dial.







The figures of the apostles, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John were carved on the wooden screen at the base of the tower in the early 19c.



The tower itself is a perpendicular tower 92 feet high. The crestings were added in 1897. (Look up when you go back outside.)

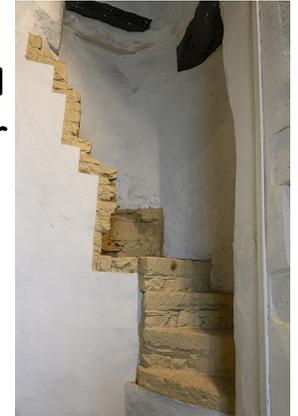


One of the bells was donated by Robert Stanshawe in 1470, another was donated in 1600 and Robert Stokes of Stanshawes Court donated one in 1723. The Funeral bell is dated 1765. From the tower there is a good view over the surrounding countryside and in less peaceful times would have been used as a place to look out for enemies and raiders. The total weight of the 6 bells is 3 tons and when rung you can feel the tower gently swaying.

This, however, is not the original tower. A previous tower was built in the centre of the Church over the transept, but circa 1546 collapsed during a storm because the foundations were old and weak, destroying the rood screen and loft. As a result, the pillars around the transept are thicker and stronger than the others to take the weight of the old tower. There are remains of an old staircase which leads nowhere now, but is most likely to have led up into the old tower.



As you turn, continue towards the back of the Church. You will see “the stairs to nowhere” on your right near the organ.



Continue down the church.



On the right you will see a mosaic representing Joseph, Mary and Jesus.



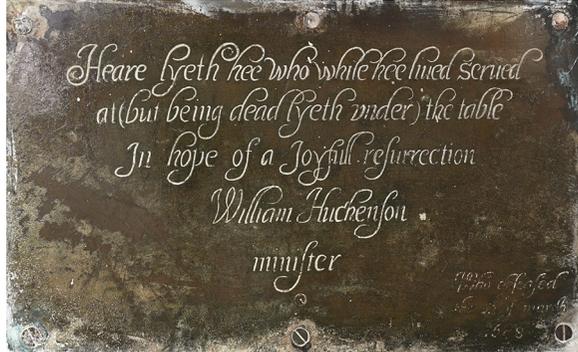
Near the door to the amenities, you will see the wall painting, believed to be St Christopher, patron saint of travellers.

This was whitewashed during the Tudor times and has been restored as much as possible.



As you pass the altar you will see a small opening in the north piscine niche.

**M** A brass plate bears the inscription “here lyeth he who while he lived served at (but being dead lyeth under) the table. William Huchenson, Minister 1558. A sense of humour!!



Stained glass windows survived slightly better. Most of these in St. Mary’s are Victorian (about 100 years old). Many of the original windows were smashed by soldiers and mobs about 400 years ago. During the Civil War soldiers stationed at Yate Court in 1644 marched through Yate and destroyed the original altar windows.

As many pieces as possible of the original medieval glass were retrieved and put back into another window on the East wall of the North Chancel to the left of the main altar, as a memorial of that time.



Many churches and religious icons were severely damaged and some churches were even destroyed at this time.



On the right, as you continue towards the altar you will see some brass plaques.



These were often made to commemorate a local family, particularly a person of importance.

On the angled wall on the right is a brass dedicated to Alexander Staples, of a wealthy local family who lived in Yate Court, showing his family of two wives and eleven children. He died in 1590. **L** (Look at the other plaques around the church – they often help date a church.)





Also on the right, behind the wooden screen, is a window with Norman style narrow sections.



Turn right into the Lady Chancel. In the corner to your right is a very old wooden chest, which is a fine example of craftsmen's carving skills.

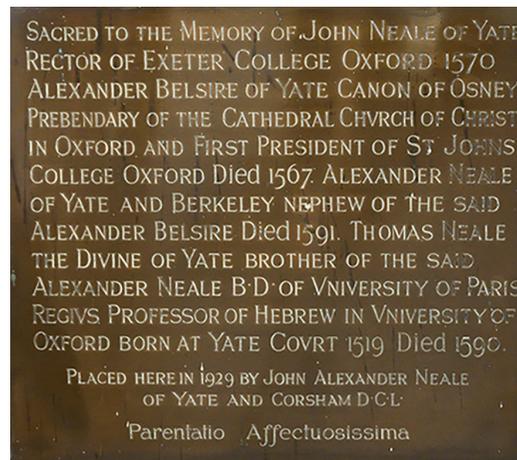


These chests were often carved from solid tree trunks and were extremely heavy. They were used to store parish registers, wills, accounts and other church records. They were always kept locked, usually with 3 locks, the keys to which were held by the vicar and two officers of the parish. The opening in the top was for donations and for payment of tythes due to the Church.

On your right as you continue towards the altar is the Priest's door.



Churches employed many craftsmen who spent their lives working in the Church and if you look up at the roof you will see timbers which are over 700 years old. In 1859 the interior of the Church was restored, the old pews replaced and work done to celebrate Queen Victoria's 60<sup>th</sup> Jubilee. During 1978-79 the Church was re-ordered again internally: the pews replaced with chairs, the old Victorian pipe organ replaced with an electronic one and an amenities block built, thus modernising the Church and encouraging family worship again. A group of clergy and lay members of St Mary's Church raised funds towards this re-ordering by going on Pilgrimage to every Cathedral in England. A charter signed by the Archbishops/Bishops/representatives of all English Cathedrals records this pilgrimage and is on the wall to the right of the main door as you exit.



In the early years of the Church, stories were told through stained glass windows, wall paintings and brass plaques such as the Neale plaque from the 16<sup>th</sup> century on the right-hand side of the altar. Unfortunately, paint was not as durable as wood, stone or brass and very few wall paintings remain.