

O God,

make the door of this church wide enough
to welcome all who need human love and
fellowship and your loving care; but
narrow enough to shut out all envy, pride
and strife. Here may the tempted find
help, the sorrowing receive comfort, the
careless be awakened to repentance and
the penitent be assured of your mercy; and
here may all your children renew their
strength and go on their way in hope and
joy; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

www.witneyparish.org.uk St Mary's Church
Church Green
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St Mary's is being restored.

We are very grateful for any help
you are able to give.

www.stmaryswitney.org.uk



Statue of Mary by Andrew Logan in the Chapel of the Annunciation
www.andrewlogan.com

SERVICES IN ST MARY'S

every Sunday:

8.00 am Holy Communion following the Book
of Common Prayer.

a peaceful meditative service

10.45 am Sung Eucharist

*a service for celebration, reflection and refreshment;
everyone is welcome and there are activities for
children*

every Wednesday:

11.00 am Holy Communion

*a short quiet midweek service in the Winchester
Room, followed by coffee and friendly conversation*

every weekday:

9.00 am Morning Prayer

5.30 pm Evening Prayer

the daily office, said in St George's Chapel

St Mary the Virgin Witney

a guide for visitors



St Mary the Virgin



In 1044 King Edward the Confessor gave a gift of land to Aelfwine, Bishop of Winchester. The land was by the Windrush, near the king's palace at Woodstock and the Forest of Wychwood. It remained a base for the bishops of Winchester for several hundred years. Aelfwine's successors founded the market around which the town grew, and built what became the parish church, St Mary the Virgin.

There was probably a Saxon church here, but the first record of the church is in 1142 in the time of Bishop Henry of Blois, an energetic builder of churches. By 1291 the church building was valued for tax at £40 and 8 pence. Witney was a prosperous market town and a centre for the wool trade. As the town grew, rich citizens began to fund decorations and additional building in their church.

The earliest parts of the present building are the inner door of the north porch (the main entrance) and the pillars of the nave. These are not true pillars but the remains of the original outer walls of the Norman church. Two half-moon windows remain in the wall that now forms the south side of the nave.

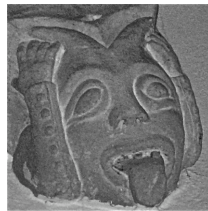
A walk round the church

Start at the back of the church, at the **west door**. From here you can see the whole space, with the curving arches of the crossing, the transepts leading off to either side, and the chancel in the far distance. Look up to see the carvings above the clerestory on the south wall of the nave. These are supposed to represent the heads of Bishop Henry of Blois, the architect of the church, and the Bishop of Lincoln on the south wall, and on the north wall the architect's wife.

The **Wenman Tomb** at the rear of the nave has been moved from the 14th century Wenman memorial chapel (now the parish office). The brass shows Richard Wenman, a medieval wool trader, in a fur-lined gown with his purse on his belt and his family around him.



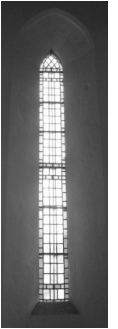
Go forwards along the **north aisle**, past the north door, to the **St George chapel**. This is kept as a space for prayer. Look up to see the carved head of a man making a face, and look for the small modern statue of George and the dragon. On the west wall of the chapel there is a memorial tablet to Henry Box, who founded a grammar school next to the church - now the Henry Box School.



Go on to the **north transept**. The huge wooden parish chest has three locking plates and three separate keys, one for each churchwarden and one for the rector. It dates from the 15th century. The table was made when the church's pulpit was dismantled in the 19th century. Its hexagonal top

used to be the sounding board, forming a ceiling for the pulpit so as to amplify the preacher's voice. The window opposite the chest shows saints. The 14th century **north window** is plain glass, so it is easier to see its spectacular flowing stone tracery. It was blown out during the Second World War but restored to its original state. Under the window is an unusual two-level tomb, perhaps that of the auditor, or steward, of the Bishop's Palace (the Witney manor house of the bishops of Winchester.)

In the **chancel** there are narrow 13th century lancet windows in north and south walls and in the east window, remodelled to the same lancet design in the 19th century. The stained glass, from the same period, shows St Michael, St Paul, St Peter and St Cecilia, and scenes from the accounts of Jesus' resurrection.



In the middle of the **crossing**, under the tower, look back to the great west window. This was donated by the daughter of a steward of the Blenheim estate. The glass, by Wailes of Newcastle, shows scenes from the life of Joseph - Pharaoh's steward. In the crossing, look for the memorial to Dr Edward Batt, showing the Good Samaritan. Dr Batt's family founded the Batt School in Witney.

In the south transept are the Annunciation chapel and the parish room, called the Winchester Room to mark the long connection of the bishops of Winchester with Witney. Here and along the **south aisle** of the nave are many memorial tablets, some with remarkable descriptions of the virtues of the people they commemorate.

he was Pious without Hypocrisy,
Chearfull without Levity, Most remarkable
for his Sincerity, a bitter Enemy to Crafty
and Defigning men, lived in great esteem