

The Church of St Mary's the Virgin Overton



The Church of St Mary's the Virgin is situated in the centre of our community, and perhaps is most famous for the ring of yew trees that are in the Churchyard, which are one of the 'Seven Wonders of Wales'.



It is thought that a small wattle and daub oratory was on the present site in the 7th century. By the 12th century a first stone church was built. A Norman cross is built in to the western pillar of the nave and some old coffin lids remain. In the last quarter of the 14th century a larger church was built and the tower remains from that building. The nave was replaced with a larger one, probably with transepts, in the 1450s.

What effect the Reformation of Henry VIII had on St Mary's is unknown, but the bells were installed in the reign of James I, the tenor bell being inscribed '1615 Gloria Deo in Excelsis'. In the 1640s the church must have been damaged by the Parliamentary troops that passed through the village.



In 1710 in the reign of Queen Anne the chancel was added on the eastern end of the nave, and still has a brass candelabra of twelve lights 'the gift of Cath Humphries 1746'. The north aisle and the vestry on the south side of the Tower were added in 1819, but by 1855 the north aisle was widened and a south aisle built to match it.

In 1870 extensive restoration was carried out, the box pews and the 18th century features were removed and the wooden chancel arch replaced with a stone arch. The ceiling of the aisle was raised by 4 feet and a clerestory added with a steeper pitch roof on hammer beams supported by detached stone corbel shafts.

The north transept was made into the present Lady Chapel in 1920 and the pulpit moved to its present position. At the same time the choir stalls were moved from the chancel their present position, being replaced in 1935 by the present day oak stalls. They were carved by Miss Evelyn Wybergh, a parishioner who died in 1961 at the age of 91. She also carved the war memorial in the north aisle and made the statue of the Virgin and Child.



In 1992 a new yew tree was planted by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II during her visit to Overton to mark the 700th anniversary of King Edward I's Royal Charter in 1292. To mark the Millennium five oval stained glass panels were commissioned and placed in the Lady Chapel window.



In 2004 the 1920 organ was removed and an organ of far better quality was obtained from Bethel Chapel, Penygroes which was due to be demolished.

For the times of services at St Mary's see the back page of the Overton Oracle which can be read on line on www.overton-on-dee.co.uk