

# Shrewton

## St. Mary's Church

### through the Ages

Shrewton was the property of Edward of Salisbury, the high Sheriff of Wiltshire, whose father came with William the Conqueror and was rewarded with large grants (in Wiltshire alone, 38 manors). His grandson Patrick was created Earl of Salisbury. Lady Ella was the only child to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl, William, and she succeeded to the title as Countess of Salisbury. She married William Longespee, natural son of King Henry II and half-brother to Richard the Lion heart and to John. He was the first person to be buried in Salisbury Cathedral in 1226. The heads carved into the column in the north Aisle of our church are said to be William and Ella, and comparisons with the effigy of William in the cathedral would reasonably confirm this.



Our church is dedicated in honour of the Blessed Virgin Mary. There may have originally been a Saxon church here which gave way to the more elaborate Norman one. In 1825 the building consisted of a chancel 20' 6" long by 11' 2" in breadth, including two small aisles, north and south, of 35' 10".

In 1853 the church was considered too small and dilapidated and it was rebuilt with the exception of the tower and the Western bays of the nave. A new chancel was erected, the south aisle was made the same width as the north aisle and both extended to form chancel aisles. People were pleased, saying, "They had a bigger and better church, but it was still the old church". If you stand in the middle of the nave and look at the columns, old and new are obvious; the same can be seen by looking at the roof levels. The tower has traces old old Norman work.

The organ was built in 1860 – note the piscine (basin with drain for cleansing sacred vessels) in the south east corner of the organ chamber.

Foundation stone (under the east window) was laid by Bishop Hamilton on 5<sup>th</sup> September 1854 and exactly 1 year later the church was consecrated. Another piscine from the old church is built into the sanctuary south wall.

The large east window "the Ascension of Our Lord" is rare and from the studio of Messrs. Lavers, Barraud and Westlake, placed on September 1875, consecration day.

Fragments of ancient sculpture are displayed in the window alcoves on the south side.

In 1553 there were three bells (3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 6<sup>th</sup>) which were recast in 1619 by John Walles of Salisbury. "Save me O Lord", "Call upon God", "Ring the Bells". A 4<sup>th</sup> bell "Clement Tossier cast me" was added in 1717. A 5<sup>th</sup> bell " Prosperity to the Parish" cast by Abel Rudhall, was added in 1757. The present peal of six was completed in 1928 with the "Children's bell" from the foundry of Mears and Stainbank.

The Rectors and Vicars, starting with Hosbert in 1241, were under the patronage of the Bishop of Salisbury. Their names are displayed on the west wall of the Nave.



## The Mystery of the Missing Spire

The church was extensively altered by T.H. Wyatt in 1854 but preserves many of the earlier features. Before alteration the nave was Romanesque, the chancel early English and the West tower perpendicular, there was also, apparently, post reformation work, for example a porch at the West end of the South aisle. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century rebuilding the West tower was retained but the nave was lengthened to the East by one bay. The chancel thus had to be rebuilt on new foundations, although the early 13<sup>th</sup> century arch, were reused. The aisles were completely reconstructed and a North doorway and porch added. Nearly all the furnishings, including the font bowl, were replaced. A spire was intended for the West tower but was never erected.

**Source:** Shewton St. Mary