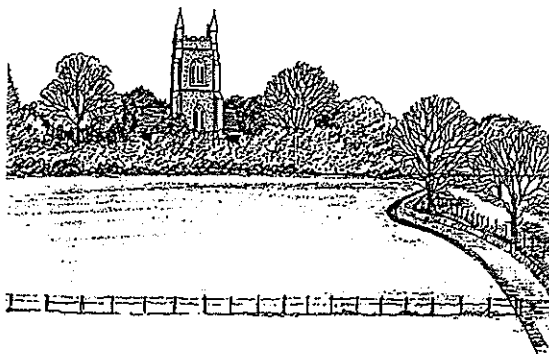


# St. Mary's Church

Hartley Wintney  
Hampshire

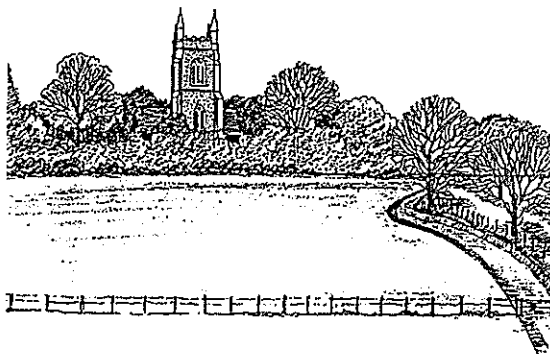


The Church On The Hill

Produced by Hartley Wintney Parish Council

# St. Mary's Church

Hartley Wintney  
Hampshire



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A brief history and guide to the church and churchyard,  
including a description of the church's medieval wall  
paintings and notes on memorials of particular  
interest to be found in the churchyard  
written by the late David Gorsky

Cover picture by Colin Fisher

## Forward

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*The author acknowledges use of extracts from an article by Walter Hayes CBE, past Trustees of The Churches Conservation Trust, in this forward.*

Parishioners of Hartley Winthney can reasonably claim that nothing better represents 1000 years of Christianity than St. Mary's. Although the present building dates back to 1234, it is believed that a chapel stood on the site for years before - who knows for how long there has been a church on the hill?

A building set almost aloof from the 20th century village, it is to older residents of the village, the last link with the community in which they grew up and have lived our lives.

It is superficial to see St. Mary's as only a building but if its stones could speak, what tales they could tell. So much of England was borne in its churches. Painting and sculpture, woodworking and decorative arts began there.

P.V. 28.05.06

When Caxton set up his printing press in Westminster in 1476 there were already others in 70 towns in eight European countries but they produced books in Latin. It was the translation of the Bible that created the English language; Caedmon, a monk in a monastery at Whitby, was the founder of English poetry.

The inspiration that men and women drew from the English churches provided the impetus for all the cultural riches of medieval England as they did later to bell-founding and brass-making, effigies and epitaphs - even landscape painting - and the history of human beings is monumentally remembered in churchyards where wild orchids will still be found.

The sun streams into our churches through patterns of stained glass - some windows dating from the 14th century - and the organs, though hard to maintain and keep in use, are an ever present reminder that they were also the cradle of English music.

St. Mary's Church is maintained by The Churches Conservation Trust, an organisation comprising just sixteen dedicated people who are responsible for the maintenance and restoration of 312 churches throughout the country.

Churches where there are to be found most important recollections; churches which in their special way provide a comprehensive history of English crafts and culture, faith and fortitude, imagination and inspiration.

The Parish Council annually arranges for St. Mary's to be open for the Heritage Days organised by The Churches Conservation and Civic Trusts to allow the public to better appreciate the importance of the building to the history of our community.

It also included two opportunities to focus attention on the Church in its Millennium celebrations. To mark the start of the new Millennium, St. Mary's was flooded on New Year's Eve and many parishioners visited the church, not only to see a unique sight and set out on a candle light procession of witness, but to spend a few moments reflecting on what St. Mary's represents to the village.

On June 17/18th, the St. John's Church Flower Rota and Women's Institute decorated St. Mary's as a traditional country church and at a special service held on the Sunday, commemorative Millennium gifts were presented to the four Churches in the village by the Chairman of Hartley Winthney Parish Council, Cllr. Frank Powler; the Flower Festival was repeated in June 2002 for the Golden Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth.

Events at St. Mary's Church not only provide an opportunity to increase awareness of the function of the Churches Conservation Trust and raise funds for its work, but also to remember David Gorsky's invaluable contribution to village life and his involvement with St. Mary's Church.

## A Brief History

For over six centuries, from 1234 to 1870, St. Mary's was the parish church of Hartley Winney. In 1870 a new church, St. John's, was opened in what had become the centre of the largely 18th century village of Hartley Row. Since then St. Mary's has been used mainly in connection with funerals as it is surrounded by the churchyard which adjoins the parish burial ground.

In 1975 St. Mary's was vested in the Redundant Churches Fund who undertook extensive repairs under the guidance of Mrs. Penelope Adamson, Architect to the fund. The most exciting feature of this work was confirmation that there are considerable remains of medieval wall paintings in many parts of the church and these have been uncovered under the supervision of Mr. Clive Rouse.

No one knows when a church was first built on the hill of Hartley Winney. Before the Norman Conquest the land was part of the Saxon Manor of Odham and William the Conqueror kept it for his own. Within the area covered by the manor there were "2 priests, 2 churches", one of these churches was almost certainly where Odham parish church was built, the other may well have been on the hill at Hartley Winney.

The first written record refers to the induction of Nicholas de Warwick as Rector of the "Chapel of Hurley" in 1221 twenty years after a priory of Cistercian nuns had been established on the marshy land below the hill. At first the church was almost certainly of wood but in 1234 the nuns opened a new stone church and the present chancel and part of the nave may be part of that building. From then until the time of Henry VIII, St. Mary's history is really the history of the nuns of Winney Priory.

In 1315 there was a famine after the crops failed and the nuns, as well as the villagers whose huts were on the ridge close to the church, were reduced to near starvation. Messengers were sent to the Archbishop of Canterbury requesting help and the Bishop of Winchester was ordered to send them aid to tide them over the famine, which lasted until 1318.

Two centuries later, in 1535, the nuns were probably aware that King Henry was visiting nearby Elvetham to see one of his wife's pretty maids of honour, Jane Seymour. The consequences were a disaster for Winney Priory. On May 19th 1536 Anne Boleyn was executed in the Tower of London.

The following day Henry VIII married Jane Seymour and three days later, on May 23rd, a commission sent by Thomas Cromwell reported to the King on the Priory. No hint of a scandal could be found and the ten nuns were "by report of good conversation, which truly deserveth to continue in the same religion". They had two priests, twenty seven servants and an income of £52.00 a year. But good conversation was not sufficient to save the Priory. On St. Mary Magdalens Day 1536 the nuns were turned out and the property confiscated by the King.

After that the church of St. Mary was under the new Lords of the Manor. The first was Richard Hill, the Keeper of Henry's Cellar, and he was succeeded by Sir John Mason who in turn sold to the Zouchie family who built Bramshill House in 1613. The fifty years following the nuns' departure could not have been quiet ones for St. Mary's. Under Henry's son, Edward VI, the Latin mass was abolished the clergy were allowed to marry for the first time and all statues in churches were supposed to be destroyed.

Perhaps this was when the statue of Our Lady was removed from its recess on the right of the chancel arch, although it may have been hidden by the faithful and replaced, only to disappear in the days of Cromwell's plundering Roundheads, when Hartley Winney was in the front line between the Cavaliers and Cromwell's forces.

A new English prayer book was introduced in 1549 and although many people revolted against this change, Hartley Winney's priest and parishioners of Hartley Winney could hardly do so; the Regent of England, King Edward's uncle the Lord Protector of Somerset and the man most responsible for all these changes, had his country home just down the bottom of the hill at Elvetham Hall.

The vicar of Hartley Winney at that time, one John Peure, must have been a remarkable man to survive in that position right through from the reign of Henry VIII when he became vicar in 1545 to Queen Elizabeth's reign in 1558.

After these exciting years, when St. Mary's was at the heart of the Reformation, there was a quiet period. In 1629 a new silver chalice was made for the church and a communion table still in the church was made a few years later in 1636. Two of the bells in the church were cast about the same time by the Knights of Reading, one in 1612 and one in 1642.

St. Mary's survived the Civil War without ill-treatment from Oliver Cromwell's soldiers, although in the neighbouring parish of Odham, the Roundheads drove the vicar and his wife out into the snow at pistol point, the vicar of Mattingley was also evicted.

Possibly St. Mary's was protected by the fact that Sir Robert Reynolds, brother of one of Cromwell's generals, bought Elvetham Hall from the Royalist Marquis of Hertford in 1649 and ten Hartley Winney couples were married in his presence after one of Oliver Cromwell's decrees in 1654 had forbidden marriages in church. When at last the church could be used again in 1658 the first wedding in on June 22nd between William Mead and Elizabeth Foster must have been a grand event.

There was an aftermath to the Civil War in 1670 when four villagers sued the vicar over payments of tithes, claiming that before the Civil War villagers had only to pay a small proportion of their garden produce - hops, apples, cabbages, lambs, wool, geese, eggs, pigs, hay, cow's milk and fire wood - to the vicar but he was now trying to raise the amounts.

A few years later a prosperous local shopkeeper, Robert Ray, who died in 1677, left arrangements in his will for sixty ells of cloth to be distributed every Good Friday to widows and widowers of the parish. Mr. Ray must have been a careful man because in the directions for administering the charity he made it clear that the good canvas for the cloth should be bought "at ye shoppe where I now live in Hartley Winney".

The board recording Mr. Ray's gift is still in the church on the west wall of the nave while the charity, having been amalgamated with similar bequests, is still in existence.

On the other side of the west door there is an interesting example of the Royal Arms of Queen Anne dated 1705 showing the Stuart shield which she used from 1702 to 1708, before the Act of Union with Scotland necessitated a further change to the Royal Arms. On Queen Anne's succession an Act

of Parliament had been rapidly passed to ensure that the Hanover family should succeed because they were the only descendants of King Charles II who were Protestants. To ensure people understood their complicated new royal loyalties, the Queen's Coat of Arms was sent around to all the churches.

Hartley Winthney was the last place her rival, the Stuarts, were likely to find support. One of the two commanders of the British Army buried at St. Mary's was the notorious General (Hangman) Henry Hawley. He had fought in Marlborough's army and was wounded in the Jacobite Rebellion of 1715. When Bonnie Prince Charles's revolt broke out in 1745 he was appointed commander of the English army in Scotland but in January 1746 was defeated by the retreating Highlanders at Falkirk.

Hawley himself was being entertained by the wife of one of Prince Charles's officers, who played her part so well that Hawley arrived in the field late, half drunk and without his wig.

Despite this defeat General Hawley commanded the cavalry at the defeat of Bonnie Prince Charles at Culloden and was later in charge of the gibbets at Inverness, Fort Augustus and Edinburgh to teach the clansmen a ghastly lesson. He and his descendants, who lived at West Green House, are buried in the vault below the chancel and two of the hatchments on the west gallery and the south gallery are Hawley coats-of-arms.

From about 1760 Hartley Winthney expanded rapidly as a centre of the coaching trade. By 1834 the church needed major expansion, when the north and west transepts were added in brick together with the new east window in the chancel. The Lord's Prayer, the Creed and the Ten Commandments were added about the same time and eight years later the stone and flint tower was added to hold the peal of bells cast in 1612, 1642 and 1721. They were rung in 1940 at the time of Dunkirk when the Home Guard used the top of the tower as an observation post.

Although St. Mary's was abandoned on August 12th 1870 by the villagers moving down to the new Church of St. John, it has continued to keep its links with national history. At the same time as the Home Guard were using the tower, Hartley Winthney's second famous soldier, Lord Albion, became Chief of the Imperial Staff and Churchill's closest advisor throughout the war.

Like his friend and master Winston Churchill, he chose to be buried in a simple churchyard where the birds that he loved to watch as his main recreation from the war chirp over his tombstone in the north-west of the churchyard. From there one still can look down the hill to the remains of the old Winthney Priory and across to the home of Jane Seymour over the original medieval fields which have survived for seven centuries.

## A Walk Around the Church

Entering the church through the tower built in 1842, note the medieval door to the nave and the name Israel Woodes(on) carved in the stone on the left hand side of the door. He was married in St. Mary's in 1667 and died in 1692 and was probably the stonemason who restored the church when it was brought back into use after the Civil War. On the west wall behind the door is a charity board which reads:

"By Will bearing Date the 24th day of March 1674, Mr. Robert Kay bequeathed to the Poor of this Parish for ever Sixty

Ells of Cloth to be distributed yearly on Good Friday and a Preference to be given to such Widowers and Widows as do not receive relief of the Parish.

Also Robert Corham Esq. of Heckfield by his Will dated the 20th day of March 1593 left to the Poor of this Parish for ever 6s 8p to be paid out of the Rent of a Cottage called Black House now in the possession of Augustus Hill Bradshaw Esq."

This board must have been put up at the time of the extension in the 1830's as Augustus Hill Bradshaw was living at that time in Hartley Grange.

Passing the entrance to the west gallery, on the left are the wall paintings showing Pride with the other six deadly sins (described in the section on wall paintings). Turn and look at the hatchment on the west gallery; it shows the arms of Catherine Hawley, who died in 1835.

On the gallery on the right are her husband's arms. He was Lieutenant Colonel Henry William Toovey Hawley of West Green House, who commanded the First Dragoon Guards and whose grandfather was General Henry ("Hangman") Hawley. In 1794 he married Catherine, daughter of the Reverend George Jephson of Lincoln, whose arms were the Cock's Head and his hatchment was erected in 1803 at his death.

The hatchment on the north gallery is that of Sir Robert Sloper, Knight of the Bath, who died in 1802. Hatchments were coats of arms hung outside the house for the period of mourning and then placed in a church shortly after their owner was buried. It is unusual for three to have survived for so long in such good condition.

The stained glass window in the old medieval window on the north side of the nave was put up to the memory of Charles Felix Palmer, who died aged 3 on Good Friday 1859. His aunts and uncles erected both the window and the tablet below.

Either side of this window are the medieval wall paintings of St. Christopher on the left with his staff carrying the infant Jesus across the stream and on the right hand side an unidentified and unique painting showing four riderless horses which may represent part of a larger painting of the Pharaoh of Egypt pursuing the Israelites across the Red Sea.

The north and south transepts were built in 1834 to enlarge the church when the village was prospering on the extensive coaching trade between London and Exeter. The three "Sentences" (the Lord's Prayer, Creed and Ten Commandments) above the chancel arch which was rebuilt at the same time also date from 1834.

The two alabaster tablets on the left of the chancel are to Captain Glover of the Light Infantry who was killed in battle in New Zealand in 1864 and his brother, who died of wounds in the same action. They were nephews of Mrs. Hawley of West Green House. Below is the tablet of another Mrs. Hawley, who died in 1861.

The Hawley vault is below the chancel and the other tombstones in the chancel are those of Edward Downes who died in 1710, Mrs. Anne Watkins, who died in 1714 and Mrs. Caesar, who died in 1789. The wall paintings in the chancel are described in a separate section on wall paintings.

The altar table is inlaid with the date 1636 and the altar rails were placed in the church in 1780. Possibly the oldest article in the church is the piscina in chalk stone on the right of the altar which may date from 1220. The window on the right nearest the chancel arch is a "squint" window, probably used by lepers for watching the Host being raised during the Mass.

The niche on the right of the chancel arch is a survival from pre-Reformation days when there would have been a statue of the Virgin placed here with an altar below. The Parish chest opposite the niche almost certainly dates from pre-Reformation times, although the records have been kept elsewhere since 1870; the box pews were renewed in the 1830's. On the south side of the nave is the only modern monument in the church. It is a wooden carrying in the memory of Edith Lettaby of New York who lived in Hartley Winney from 1918 to 1920 and died in 1927.

Neither of the windows on the south side of the nave are medieval although the one nearer the west door is the older of the two. At the back of the south aisle is an old funeral bier and above it is the coat-of-arms of Queen Anne dating from 1705. It was placed in all churches when the Royal Family were anxious to establish the Protestant right of succession.

Their rivals to the throne, the Stuarts, were still proclaiming their stronger claim from the French Royal Court and it was only ten years later, in 1715, that Bonnie Prince Charlie's father made the first military attempt to re-establish the Stuart family on the throne.

## The Wall Paintings at St. Mary's

All medieval churches were more or less completely painted inside. The reasons why so few have survived are first that the medieval artist never intended his paintings to last for ever; paintings were constantly being over-painted as they became dilapidated or unfashionable or the churches were altered.

Secondly all wall paintings, and for that matter, painted carved images, were obliterated at the Reformation when the walls were covered with lime-wash. The third cause for their disappearance was the practice of our Victorian ancestors of stripping off plaster from the walls to reveal stonework which was never meant to be seen.

Literally hundreds of wall paintings were destroyed in the nineteenth century including the paintings which must have covered St. Mary's walls where the two transepts were built in 1834.

The chancel arch was rebuilt at the same time and the new east window and a new south window inserted, so that the paintings in St. Mary's have survived only in those areas untouched by the Victorians.

The purpose of the paintings was not primarily for decoration. It was partly an act of worship to decorate the House of God but more important was its teaching purpose. There were no printed books until the end of the fifteenth century and in any case the handwritten bibles and other religious books were in languages like Latin and French which the ordinary village people would not have understood. Indeed, hardly any of them would have been able to read at all.

So the harassed village priest used the walls of his church as a "Poor Man's Bible". Most of them were painted in the twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth centuries by travelling artists based in a few centres of which Winchester was one of the most important.

English wall paintings are quite different from the more elaborate frescos found on the Continent of Europe, both in form and technique.

In France and Italy artists were more concerned with elaborate colouring and solid filling of draperies and shading, whereas their English counterparts concentrated on the linear essentials, usually the minimum of what was needed to convey the meaning of the subject.

In comparison with Europe the paintings are poor artistically, even crude, but moving in their simplicity and utter sincerity. In the warmer countries on the continent the outline of the picture was set in bold strokes on a basic coat of plaster.

This was covered by a finishing coat of plaster on which the artist worked while it was still wet, the pigments sinking right into the surface. These frescos (meaning "fresh" or "wet") were unsuitable to English conditions because of the poor walling materials and the climatic conditions. On a thin chalk rubble in a damp and cold climate, the artist had to use the "secco" technique.

The whole wall was plastered and given a surface finish of lime-pully. This was then damped and painted on with clear lime water and simple pigments, such as red and yellow ochre made from oxide of iron, black from charcoal, greens from a copper salt and all these were fixed probably using skim milk.

The most common painted wall treatment was the imitation stone joint. Examples of this can be seen on both sides of the chancel at St. Mary's. This was often decorated with simple rose patterns and the earliest of these at St. Mary's can be seen in the same part of the chancel very faintly showing at a lower level than the fleur-de-lis pattern

Another common early background treatment was the vine scroll with flowers and tendrils, a good example of which, dating from about the fourteenth century, can be seen on the right hand side of the stained glass window in the nave.

The subjects for the main paintings were either stories from the Old Testament or the New Testament, figures of Saints or of Moralities.

It was the last group which was used most by medieval priests to illustrate the difference between good and evil and it is significant that the most interesting and best preserved of Hartley Whitney's wall paintings is of the last category: the seven deadly sins on the left of the nave below the west gallery.

The only example of an Old Testament story in St. Mary's is the four horses, one yellow, one red, one white and one grey, coming through a large gateway but without riders. This group is to the right of the stained glass window in the nave. So far their origin has defied interpretation and they are unique to English wall paintings.

One possibility is that they are the four horses drawing Pharaoh's chariot and pursuing the Israelites as they fled from Egypt across the Red Sea. Unfortunately the area which would have been occupied by the fleeing Israelites was completely destroyed by the Victorians when they built the north transept.

There are three good examples of individual Saints. On the left of the stained glass window in the nave is a large painting of St. Christopher with an enormous hand grasping a lower-topped staff, held at an angle. Parts of the Saint's clothes and the scroll border going round the pictures are clearly visible.

St. Christopher, the patron saint of travellers, was invoked by anyone setting out on a journey and was usually positioned near or opposite the door. It is possible there was once a door in the usual place on the south side of the nave facing the St. Christopher painting so that travellers would have seen him last before they set out.

The second Saint, which is more difficult to make out unless the painting is sprayed with water, is on the splay of the window on the left hand side of the chancel. At the top there is a background painting of a niche and below that is the hair of St. Margaret of Antioch, emerging from the dragon which is a smaller version of the dragon which can be seen more clearly above the east window.

St. Margaret was the Patron Saint of women in child birth so the picture would have close to the altar where women of the village could come and pray before their labour started and again to give thanks after a successful birth.

The third Saint is an enormous standing figure of St. George in a close fitting helmet spearing the dragon in yellow ochre, lying on its back, bunched tail in the air with front claws, open mouth and ears hanging down all above the east window of the chancel. Flanking him are two archangels identified by their circles with a cross on the front of their wings.

This subject with its background decorated with five parallel roses in purple red is extremely unusual and is in the place where one would normally expect to see the "Christi in Majesty" sitting on His throne.

As the church was never dedicated to St. George and the painting dates from the fourteenth century when the nuns of Whitney Priory and their village suffered three years of famine it is possible that the painting was a thanksgiving for the relief of the scourge.

The other paintings in the chancel do not seem to be connected. The scroll on the main beam looks to be of a very early date. The fleur-de-lis is the normal style in Churches dedicated to the Virgin Mary whose symbol was the lily. They were clearly applied at a later date, probably in the fourteenth or fifteenth century with a stencil.

Apart from their connection with the dedication of the church to the Virgin Mary they may have some connection with the success of the English in the French wars, perhaps placed there as a thanksgiving when the local bowmen returned from the battle of Agincourt in 1415.

The other remnant of a yellow and black rectangle is part of the frame for a biblical text which was painted on top of the plain white lime-wash after the Reformation as a substitute for the multi-coloured paintings which had been whitewashed over by the Reformers. These biblical texts painted in Elizabethan times were very similar to those painted in Victorian times, two of which still survive on either side of the east window.

The painting of the seven deadly sins under the west gallery on the north side of the church is of particular interest because the painting shows the hair styles and clothes of Hartley Whitney villagers at the time of the Wars of the Roses.

There are many similar examples in other churches as the theme gave the Parish Priest plenty of opportunity to expand on the sins of pride, envy, anger, lust, covetousness, sloth and gluttony. In the centre is the massive figure of Pride; the ribs, hand, torso and legs as well as the left breast show up well even after six hundred years.

Around the central figure of Pride four of her six daughters have been uncovered as well as the scroll surround and a background decoration of an eight-palmed flower in a lozenge. Right at the top is a man pouring liquid into a cup (Gluttony). A little lower to the right is a frowning man, probably representing Envy.

Near the torso to the left is a man holding something in his left hand, probably representing Covetousness, and at the bottom to the right are a couple embracing, the woman above with her cheek pressed against the man's cheek and the man's hand holding hers.

These seven deadly sins' pictures are often shown with Pride as a human tree with her branches bending to the other six sins all stemming from the central stock of Pride. Chaucer used that idea in his "Parson's Tale". Nearby Gluttony at the top is what appears to be the branches of a tree so the painter may have used the same theme here.

The paintings were all uncovered and restored by Mr. Clive Rouse and his team of experts between 1977 and 1980 after being hidden for around 450 years.



## Hartley Wintney Parish Council

Since 1976 Hartley Wintney Parish Council have been responsible for the maintenance of St. Mary's Churchyard, prior to that date the grass had been cut by volunteers which had resulted in large areas of the churchyard becoming badly overgrown.

For almost twenty years the grass was cut regularly but no other work was carried out but in 1994 the Parish Council embarked on a restoration programme for the site, the results of which can be readily seen.

The lychgate was refurbished and re-rooted in 1994 and in 1997 the wooden commemorative seats throughout the site were restored. Several areas of scrub have been removed, overgrown trees trimmed and some intrusive species felled.

The over-wide paths have been returned to their original width and future plans include the restoration of many areas of damaged and eroded path edges. This work is ongoing, as is the project to restore the Irish Yews which form an integral part of the site to a more appropriate size.

The Parish Council is committed to the continued maintenance and restoration of St. Mary's Churchyard, to ensure that it continues, as it has for more than seven hundred years, to afford a peaceful haven of tranquility to parishioners and visitors alike and to complement the repair and renovation undertaken by The Churches Conservation Trust in St. Mary's Church.

The Parish Council takes this opportunity to thank its contractor, Colin Horwood Garden Services, for the high quality of maintenance and site improvement they provide both in St. Mary's Churchyard and the adjacent Parish Council Burial Ground.