

St Mary's Church Lymm

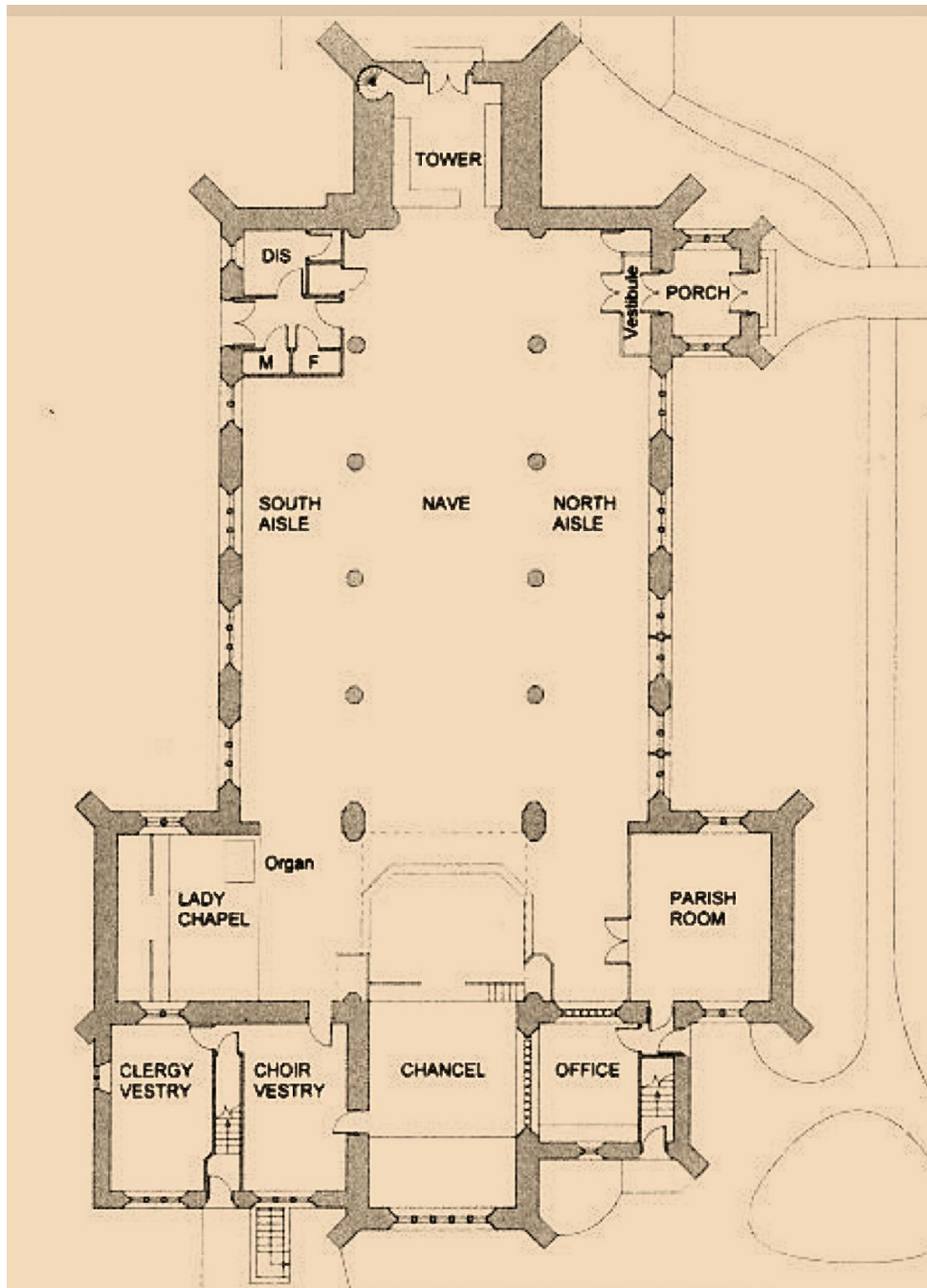
A tour through the church and through the ages



A brief history and key dates

- 680 AD the Angle Uhtred built a farm in the area.
- 700 AD - this area became part of the Christian kingdom of Mercia, and the first wooden church was built.
- 1085 - the Domesday survey tells us that there were two manors in Lymm held by Gilbert de Venables and Osbern Fitz Tezzo. Two priests alternated the Sunday service at the church which continued until Oughtrington church was built in 1868.
- 1100 a stone church was built which lasted for 200 years.
- 1278 First mention of a rector for the parish.
- 1320 the next church was built which lasted for 530 years. In this church there were no pews, the stained glass and the tower were later editions (1521).
- The oldest known gravestone is dated 1675.
- 1690 No records show when the first bells or clock were installed but the register of this date states 'oyle for ye clocke' The font dates from about 1660 and the Domville coat of arms is from about this time.
- 1850 - the mediaeval church was taken down, apart from the tower of 1521 which was increased in height. This was not a good move as it had to be rebuilt in 1890. The tower contains a clock and a peal of eight bells, the tenor being the heaviest in a Parish Church in Cheshire

Plan of the church



Your tour of the church

You will first be given information on the magnificent windows and to simplify this you need to go clockwise once you enter the church. Next you will be given information about the various key things to look out for. For this you need to go anti clockwise, again starting from the back of the church where you came in. Finally, there is a section on the tower – worth a visit.

Tour of the windows

Most of the stained glass is Victorian with the date and the donor's name at the bottom of the window. There are three windows by William Wailes (1808 – 1881). He studied under Augustus Pugin who designed the interior of the Houses of Parliament. Wailes exhibited at the Crystal Palace exhibition of 1851 and designed stained windows for many cathedrals and churches in England.

Starting at the north door – where you come into the church

Window 1: This window shows at its centre St Peter and St John healing the lame man in the Temple (Acts 3:1). St John is the man with the beard. The two side panels appear to show people going about their business in the temple of Jerusalem. There are domes and anachronistic spires in the background.

Window 2: Jesus Christ is in the centre healing the sick. Take a good look at the expressions on the faces. The sick and especially their friends look imploringly for help, whilst St Peter and St John look concerned that Jesus might become overwhelmed. This is in contrast to the usual bland expressions in most stained glass. Note again the anachronistic domes and spires in the background.

Window 3: The centre panels show on the left Jesus and his disciples with children. On the right we have the scene on the first Easter morning when Mary Magdelene (the woman with her hair uncovered), Mary the mother of Jesus and Salome came to the tomb and found that Jesus had risen. Look in the top circle panel where an angel is pointing out a shaft of heavenly light to a child. This is dedicated to Mary, wife of James Barrett of Lymm Hall. He bought Lymm Hall from the estate of Rev Macie Domville. There is a plaque about him under the tower.

Window 4: The small centre panels show on the left Christ praying in the garden of Gethsemane after the Last Supper, whilst Peter, James and John are asleep. St Peter is the one with the sword. Notice the beads of sweat on Christ's forehead. On the right-hand panel is a woman with a book and a boy at her knee. This may be showing Jesus being taught by Mary – or it could be an allegory for all mothers bringing up their children. This window is dedicated to James Barrett's daughter Mabel who died aged 15 years.

Window 5: This window is rather pale and the thing to notice is that one angel has four wings. Plus, the maker's mark is a cowled monk! It is dedicated to Gwendolen Mabel Martin who died aged 10.

Window 6: This is worth a look as it is relatively modern – 1953 - but made in a traditional way. It shows Jesus calling his disciples Peter and Andrew. Both Jesus and the bearded figure have ‘conventional’ faces, but the other face is different. This could be the face of the young man in whose memory the window was given, David Fletcher Palmer. He was a sub lieutenant who died in Korea aged 20. Note also the coat of arms of Lymm Grammar School at the top of the window.

Window 7: Hidden in the Fellowship Room is an unusual window. The window shows ‘Hope’ with her anchor and the other figure is possibly ‘Faith’. Note the top of the window features a globe of the world showing the Eastern hemisphere with Africa prominent. The window is in memory of Sarah Hope and was donated by her grandson.

Window 8: Now we are facing the magnificent East window. When the sun shines through it, it is a window that generates awe for the craftsmanship alone. Here we have Christ in majesty surrounded by saints and angels. It was installed in 1865.

In the centre, Christ is on his throne which shines with golden light. At the very top is the Paschal Lamb. Then there are assorted angels and note the Alpha and Omega letters. Below Christ are the sun and the moon.

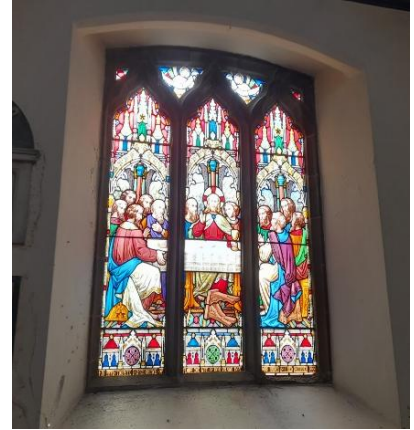
On the left is St Michael slaying the dragon (representing Satan). On the right is the Angel Gabriel. On the bottom left is St Peter holding the keys of heaven and next to him is St John the Evangelist. The chalice represents the poisoned chalice he was given to drink – he did not die; St Stephen is next to him with the stones used in his martyr. The bishop is either St Leonard or St Chad. Two angels are holding words from the Te Deum. Then there are two women – the first being St Catherine holding the wheel on which she was martyred and St Agnes holding the sword with which she was beheaded. Finally, there are two bearded figures, one is labelled ‘Abraham’, the other ‘The Prophets.’



Window 9: The window in the Lady’s Chapel shows a stylised Christ holding a child and giving a blessing, ‘Suffer the little children to come to me’. The right-hand side shows an old man giving a blessing to a young man kneeling. This could be Isaac blessing Jacob.

Window 10: This window is a fairly conventional Last Supper. Only St John is recognisable with his beardless face. The kicked over stool represents where Judas Iscariot sat. He has already left to betray Jesus. This window is by William Wailes.

Window 11: The six acts of mercy are shown here: clothe the naked, feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, comfort the sick, visit the imprisoned, give rest to the traveller. The traveller has a shell on his hat to show that he is a pilgrim who has visited the shrine of St James in northern Spain (Saint Iago de Compostela). This is dedicated to Harriet Dewhurst who died in 1859. This is another of the William Wailes' windows.

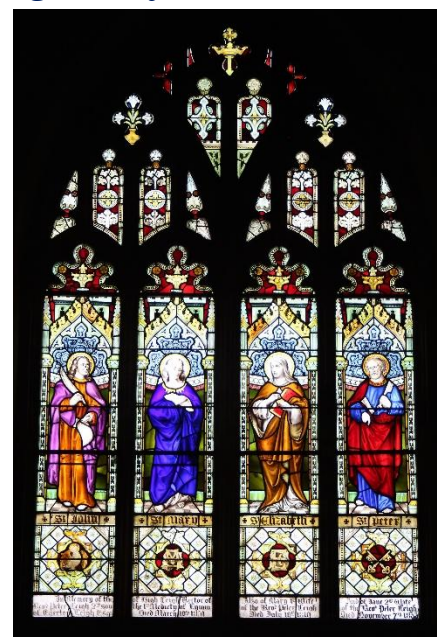


Window 12: On the left is Archangel Gabriel telling St Mary that she is to be the mother of God. On the right is the traditional nativity – plus two doves. In the centre is the crucifixion with St John, St Mary and St Mary Magdelene. What is strange is that they all appear to have the same face! This is the last of the William Wailes windows and is dedicated to Henry Heald who is the son in law of Sarah hope whose window is in the fellowship room.

Window 13: This shows Christ rising out of the tomb on Easter Sunday with an angel on either side. There are two roman guards one is asleep and one looks on in amazement. They are wearing 12th century chain mail and it has been suggested that this could be a copy of a medieval window. Notice how Christ clothed in red stands out from the background. The angel at the top carries a scroll that says 'The trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised.' This window is dedicated to Edward Trafford Legh.

Window 14: Originally situated by the font is a Virgin Mary in the classical colours we would expect, holding a lily that symbolises purity. The font however has been moved twice, so this traditional and very beautiful window can be found in the disabled toilets.

Window 15: The west window contains four clearly labelled saints. St John has his symbol of the eagle, St Mary is clothed in blue, her older cousin St Elizabeth the mother of St John the Baptist is in gold. St Peter with his symbol, the keys of heaven. It is dedicated to Rev Peter Legh 2nd son of Egerton Legh of High Legh.



Tour of historical items in the church

This time go anti clockwise. Start where the kitchen is under the tower. You can see the photographs of all the previous rectors of Lymm going back over one hundred years. Next to you are the warden's pews with Staves. These date from William IV's reign i.e. the 1800's. The wardens carry on various festivals crosiers that go back to the eighteenth century. The large lozenge shaped items high on the walls are the 'hatchments' of the Domville, Taylor, Halstead and Poole families.



Then look down the nave you can see five stone arches, and, on each side, there is a carved head. One is an angel bearing the coat of arms of Lymm. This may be a relic from the mediaeval church. The roof is fifty feet high with seven pairs of beams, five of which have a facing decorated with gold leaf. The gold leaf came from Wright's gold beating works in Lymm.

The stone font dates from the 1660's and near it is what is considered to be the oldest part of this current church. This low arch is part of a tomb canopy which has been dated from carvings as early 14th century. There are four heads set in the arch but the bottom pair are very worn. It is from the top pair that the dates have been derived.



In the centre of the arch is what is believed to be a 'Roman' altar. It is more likely to be a piscina or a statue to the St Mary. The initials carved in the pillar are JW so possibly a link to the Warburton family whose memorial brass appears on the nave pillar opposite.



Next is the Branfoot memorial which is an unusual construction. It is fresco constructed in cement or plaster.

As you go up the south side of the church you will reach the Lady Chapel. This was created in 1851. Notice the gravestone on the floor and a wood carving on the left-hand side in the style of Albrecht Durer.

There is a small brass bearing the coat of arms of the Gandy family and nearby there is a brass bearing the arms of Legh of West Hall, High Legh, Legh of Knutsford Lymm and Hawarden.

Next you will notice the plans of the Victorian church.



You are now facing the altar. The intricate stone reredos above the altar depicts from the left: the agony in the garden, Christ carrying the Cross, Christ on the Cross, Christ being laid in the tomb and finally the ascension. There are also mural tablets of the Fox family of Statham Lodge.



On the North side of the church, you will see the oak pulpit which is Jacobean and dates from 1623. The north transept was converted to the Fellowship Room in 1987 and it contains various old portraits of the pre-Victorian church.

As you continue along the north aisle, you will find the white Domville Lion and separately the coat of arms of William Domville dated 1686. The latter is on a plaque, and the date can clearly be seen. The Domville family arrived with William the Conqueror and Domvilles still live in the area.

The Church Tower

There is a separate leaflet about the tower if you should visit it.

In brief the bells were installed in 1891 after the tower was rebuilt. And they form the heaviest ring of bells in the traditional county of Cheshire. Four of the bells came from the original tower and the other four were gifts. Each bell carries an inscription about their origins and the opening words of a canticle – so that the bells may be known as the Eight Canticles. The word "canticle" comes from the Latin "canticulum," meaning "little song." It is a short piece of scripture not from the Psalms.

The clock was made by W Potts and sons from Leeds. It is in the room between the Ringing Chamber and the bells. The clock was also a gift when the tower was rebuilt. The gift was from Miss Fox of Brookfield.

