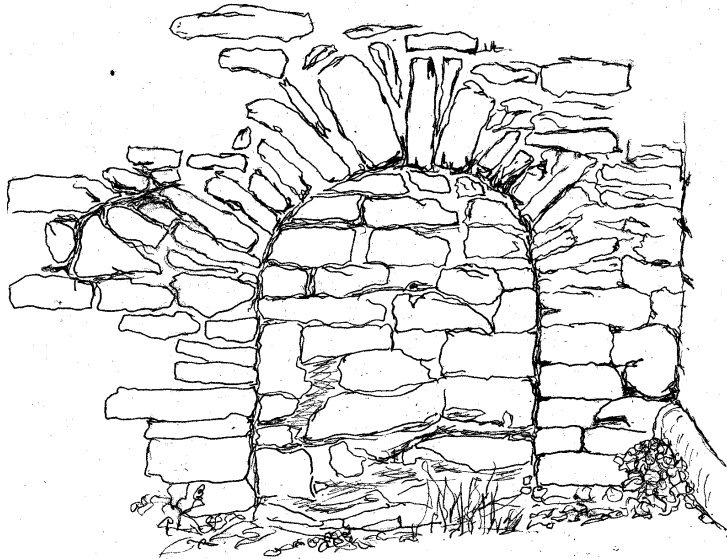


Welcome to **St Mary's Church**, Weston on the Green

A few years after the Norman Conquest the name of '*Wakelin, priest of Weston*' appears as a witness to a charter. In fact the base of the tower is 11th century and there is evidence of Saxon doorways which have been blocked up.



We do not know what the church attached to this tower looked like. Oseney Abbey was founded in 1129 and Weston church was given to it as a foundation gift. In 1273 it is recorded that, along with other churches in the diocese, Weston was consecrated by Reginald, Bishop of Cloyne and dedicated to the Virgin Mary, to St James the Apostle and to St Nicholas the Confessor. There are references to a side chapel, with memorials, which may have been dedicated to either St James or St Nicholas. During the 19th century the church was designated on a map as St Bartholomew's but is now only dedicated to St Mary. At some time a buttress was added to the SW corner of the tower and in the 14th century the tracery was added to the top of the tower. After the Reformation, in 1539, the king granted the manor, rectory and advowson of the church of Weston to Sir John Williams,

afterwards Lord Williams of Thame. The church and Manor remained with branches of this family until 1918.

In 1564 the church was reported as '*being in great decaie*' and was re-roofed and had new seats installed.



Almost 200 years later, possibly after a fire, in 1741 the building was again '*completely dilapidated*' and the present church was erected by Norreys Bertie, Lord of the Manor, on the site of the previous building. Only the tower and possibly the lower walls of the previous church were retained. This classical style 18th century building had a pedimented south door with an elaborate carved architrave and frieze on the outside. Norreys Bertie marked his work on the church with his initials and the date on the rainwater heads. The round headed window openings still evident in today's building also date from this

rebuilding. Having visited Europe Norreys Bertie also added (some say he actually commissioned) the painting behind the altar by Pompeo Battoni.

At one time there had been a chancel, as shown by the changes in the external east wall. A geophysics survey identified walls extending over 11 metres east of the present wall and aligned with the changes in the stonework. However even if a chancel was included in the 1741 rebuild by 1823 when local historian Dunkin described the church it was gone.



The inside door surround is moulded plasterwork said to have been replicated in the heavily ornamented plaster ceiling. This ceiling fell in 1807, some 60 odd years after installation and extensive repairs were required with new coping stones and beams. By 1810 '*...the church roof entirely made new and all's well*' was the churchwardens' report.

Throughout the 19th century the churchwardens recorded many expenditures on care of the fabric of the building, including pointing the stonework and maintaining the tower and bells.

The glazier and plumber were often employed on both the windows and the roof and in 1849 new doors were installed.

The church doors were used to display important parish notices such as listing those called for militia duty and giving warning that public house licences were due for renewal. These notices had, before 1837 been announced from the pulpit but after that date only ecclesiastical notices and banns were read in church and all other notices were displayed on the doors.

In 1855 the roof was re-leaded again and by the 1870-1880s more work was proposed. Plans were drawn up for the addition of a semi-circular apse to give the building a more 'church like' appearance but these were never carried out. Work was restricted to repairs to the tower, the addition of the porch and gothic tracery and glass to the windows. New seating was also added.

These last improvements also saw the addition of an organ, a new wooden floor between the pews and a stove and flue for heating. The archway behind the font giving access into the base of the tower was opened up and an external stairway to the ringing chamber added.

The three bells dating from the 15th, 16th and 17th centuries were re-cast and two more were added. This ring of five was increased to six with the addition of a new bell in 2013.

The 20th century saw some alterations within the church – the organ was moved and a canopy over the altar was added in the 1920s but removed later in the century. Electricity has replaced the oil lamps and solid fuel boiler and the oak panelling was completed in 1928.

Memorials to the dead of two world wars were added. Both the processional cross and the Armada cross were donated, along with some candlesticks. The parish bier was refurbished and is now displayed within the church.

