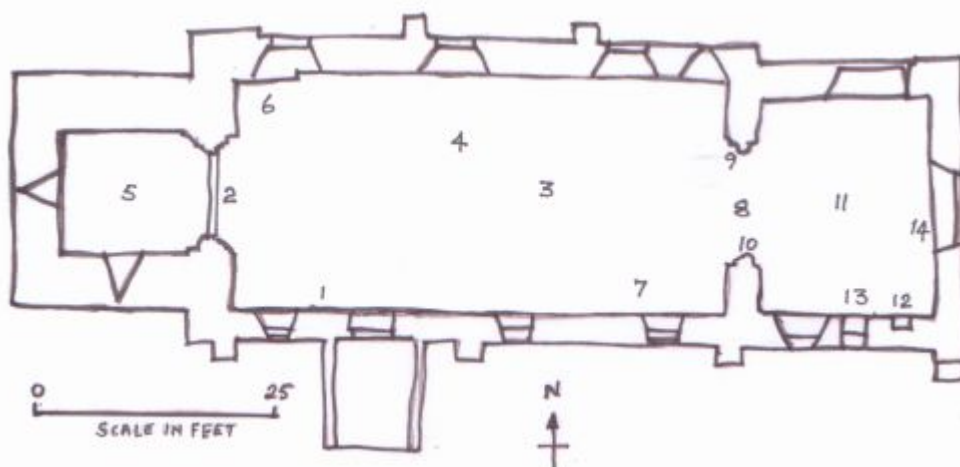


Geese, Eagles and Doves



A Walk around St Milburga's

Welcome to St. Milburga's. Thank you for coming in. Take your time to look round and make yourself a cup of tea or coffee if you wish.





So how old is the church?

The list of Rectors and Vicars (1) is a clue. Apart from modest enlargement and modification, it has been roughly the same shape and size for at least 700 years but there is evidence that parts are probably a good bit older.



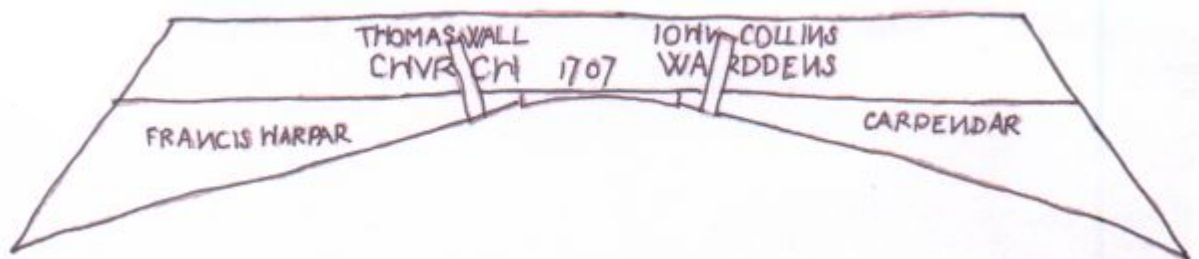
Who was this 'Milburga' that both the church and village are named after?

She was the main person in the Abbey at Wenlock, back in 680 AD. She was in charge of all this land down here, so rode around it on her white horse. One day she fell off, here in Stoke St. Milborough, (then called Godstoke) and hit her head. When farm workers came to help, there was no water to revive her, but her amazing horse struck a rock with his hoof and water gushed out. It has flowed freely ever since. Indeed, the water in our church kitchen and bathroom is from that very same source. Milurga also banished geese from Godstoke (2). You can read more about that on a separate sheet.



The church has a magnificent roof a bit like a medieval barn

Yes, the oak timbers even have some names on them (3) if you look very carefully.



This part of the church is called the nave, from the Latin word '*navis*' meaning a ship. (I suppose that is where 'navy' comes from). A church is sometimes referred to as a ship, where we can retreat to for refuge, from the journey through the seas and storms of life.

Here in the nave, where the congregation sits, individual 'needlepoint' kneelers depict the Milburga story. (4) They were made in 1995 by people who loved the church and are an example of how the interior has been constantly enhanced throughout its history by people who value the church's presence.

So what goes on up there? (5)



An example of an exciting vibrancy in our church's long life is the present enthusiasm for bell ringing. We have 8 bells and at least twice as many skilled and able bell ringers, with new learners emerging all the time. So St. Milburga's is soon to become a teaching centre for bell ringing with vital infrastructure to support it. www.stmilburga.co.uk

What is this for? (6)

This font is about a thousand years old and has been used throughout that time as a vessel for water to baptise or christen babies and adults into the family of Christ's church.



You have mentioned St Milburga and the geese, but where do eagles and doves come into it? (7)



There is a lot of symbolism in churches. An example is our lectern in the shape of a golden eagle. The eagle represents John the Evangelist who wrote the Gospel of John in The Bible. Apparently, eagles are able to look at and fly straight towards the sun. Likewise, Christians should be able to look on eternity without flinching as they journey towards their goal and a union with God.

It is very white and bright, this church... (8)



If you look up from the nave above the chancel arch, high above, there are vague remains of very old wall paintings. The church walls were probably covered all over with images once; They helped people who could not read to visualise the word of God.

(Visit The Heath Chapel, SY7 9DS, to see more original 12th century wall painting.)



So, which is the oldest bit of St. Milburga's Church? (9)

The chancel arch is the oldest datable major feature, probably early 13th century. It has an attractive decoration (10), a form also used in Ludlow Church in 1199, and Abbey Dore in the 1220s.



Why is this bit separate? (11)

This is the chancel, the space around the altar, which is usually at the east end of the church. Traditionally the clergy and choir sat in here. There is a little cavity in the wall (12), a 'piscina' or basin for the washing of communion vessels and the priest's hands. The little door (13) is called a priest's door. It was especially for the priest to go in and out, as the clergy and normal people did not mix at all during a service.



This is a colourful window...

Yes, it was put in during Victorian times. Before then, it seems that the east end was just a solid wall. In this window, if you search, you can see the dove (14). It is heading downwards and represents the Holy Spirit descending to Earth: God's spirit in creation, sustaining all things and empowering believers for Christian service.



So why should these old buildings matter?

Holy spaces matter more today than they ever have. They have soaked up prayer, grief, celebration, worship and joy over many hundreds of years, and in turn give us a place where we can encounter a sense of God's presence.

We hope you will find something of God's peace and love here in St Milburga's.

