

The Parish Churches of Leicestershire (vol2) by Andrew Swift



Three views of St Mary from the west, north west and south



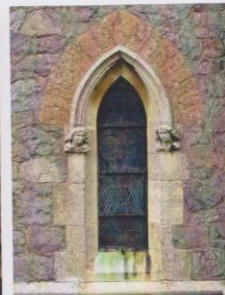
From the north



Seen from the south over Shearsby's rooftops



Super 'Hammer Horror' gargoyle



Early English inspired



Classical niche



Scenes from the churchyard



St Mary is perched on a prominent hillock

St Mary is an unusual church, not like any other in Leicestershire. It is almost a complete rebuilding of a medieval original, but small areas of medieval fabric and some artifacts survive. The building promises much when seen from the steep approach path, for the unique tower of 1789 is a detailed Classical design, and hopes rise that things will be similar inside. However, that thought is quickly dashed when the undistinguished, insipid Victorian interior is seen. So it is probably best to concentrate on that fascinating tower. Many complex architectural terms could be expended on the design, but basically the highlight is the west front which features a first stage with pediment under which is a quatrefoil opening which sits above a typical Georgian doorway with voussoirs and keystone. There is an inscribed tablet above the doorway referring to the rebuilding. The second and third stages have more characteristic Classical details, which include fine bell openings. Then things get a little strange, because the last unit of the tower is a stumpy octagon which almost looks like the beginnings of a spire that was never finished. The Classical west frontage is completed by large, empty niches in the nave west wall which seem to cry out for Grecian statues to be inserted. The rest of the church is mostly Victorian and consists of nave and chancel under one roof, and porch with sharply angled roof. The windows are Early English inspired, the east one a group of three lancets. The nave/chancel walls are faced with granite, but the east wall is original rubblestone and the tower is sandstone. At the external corners of the nave/chancel are lively gargoyles, possibly griffins. Much of the 19th century restoration and rebuilding was done under the direction of Ordish in 1880. Almost all the interior fittings are 19th century, but for some reason an unpleasant looking medieval figure remains from the earlier church and now resides in the north wall of the chancel. The piscina and sedilia were also retained, and the chancel screen is 15th century. The font is a worthy piece, with bulbous bowl, carvings of four angels and ropework around the lip. Behind it on the west wall is mounted a large, rather battered gravestone.