

South of Bridgnorth: Quatford, Oldbury, Glazeley, Billingsley and Chelmarsh.



Access Lift for the congregation on service days at St Mary Magdalene, Quatford.

You don't have to travel to Ludlow or the Welsh Marches to discover beautiful country churches – there's an abundance of them right on our doorstep.

Within 20 minutes of leaving Sedgley, you are in **Bridgnorth**, a beautiful town in its own right. Yet just south of the town there are five wonderful churches within minutes of one another, that are ideal for a short tour lasting 2-3 hours.

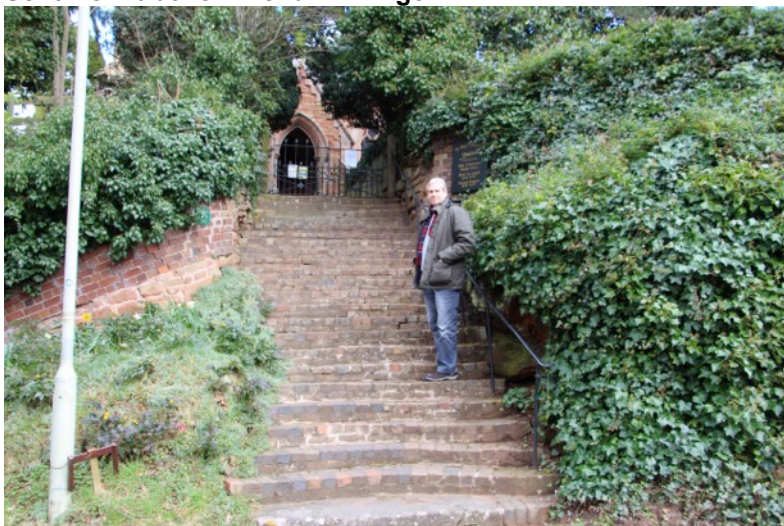


The area immediately south of Bridgnorth (indicated by red marker) takes in Quatford, Oldbury, Glazeley, Billingsley and Chelmarsh churches.

Our first visit was to **Quatford** on the main Bridgnorth to Kidderminster road. On arrival one is greeted by a flight of **40 daunting steps** to gain access to the church of **St Mary Magdalene**. However, the thoughtful church has provided a solution for the arthritic, elderly or otherwise infirm – a lift! Put it down to the vicar, whose name is – wait for it – Revd Liz **Angell!**



Sent from above – Revd Liz Angell.



The steps leading to St Mary Magdalene, Quatford.

Alas we weren't able to gain access to the St Mary's. There were three landline numbers to call - but each one of them went unanswered or to answer machine.



St Mary Magdalene, Quatford.

OLDBURY

Our next church is the closest to the centre of Bridgnorth– the church of **St Nicholas at Oldbury**. There has been a church on the site since the early part of the 12th century. Originally it was a daughter church of St Gregory, Morville and then independent after the dissolution of Shrewsbury Abbey. It is mainly the product of a Victorian restoration completed in 1863. There is a **World War 1 memorial window** dedicated to St Martin and St Alban and a plaque listing the names of those in the village who gave their lives.



The porch at St Nicholas, Oldbury.



The chancel and nave at St Nicholas, Oldbury.



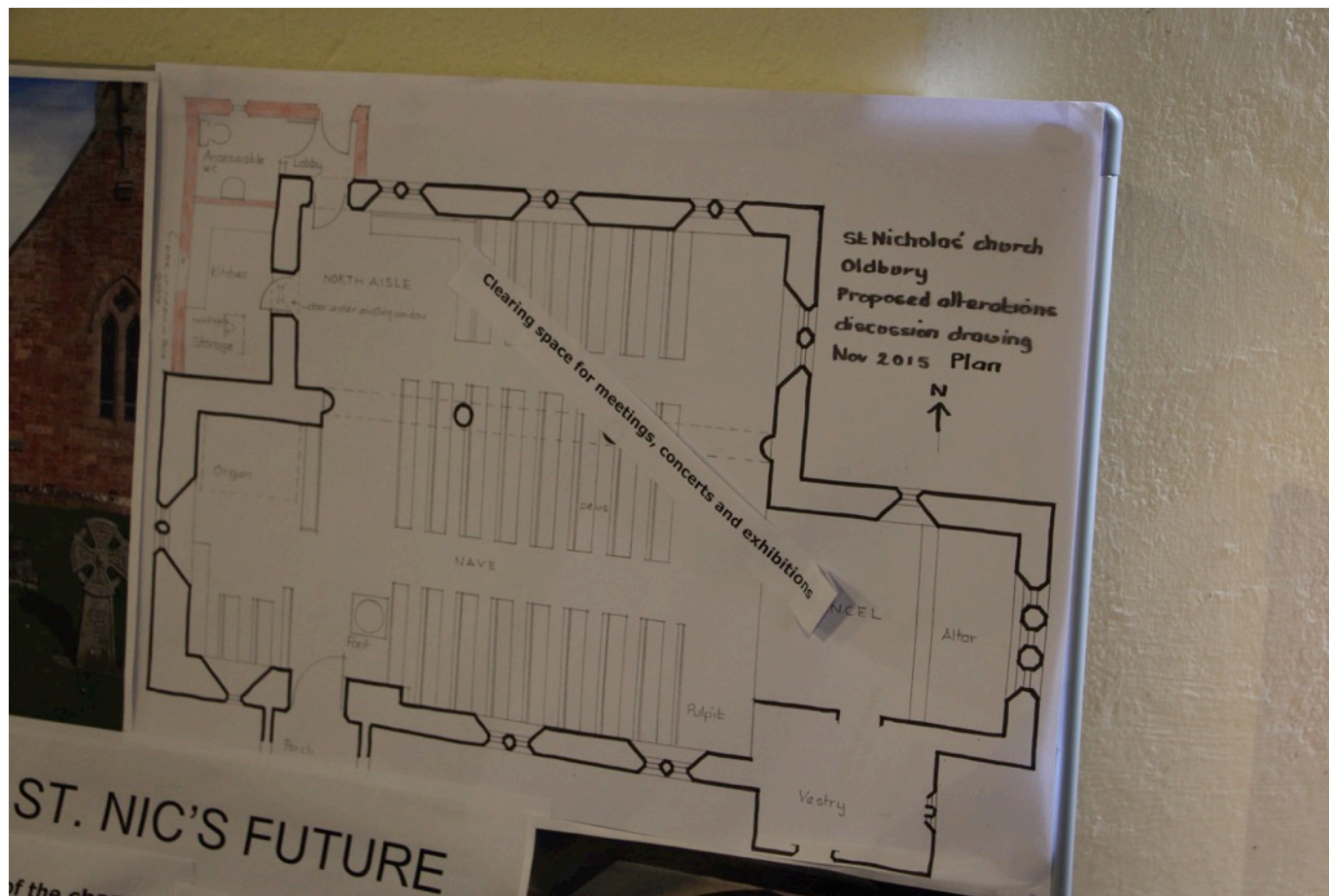
A charming stainless steel prayer circle hangs at the back of the chancel at St Nicholas, Oldbury.



The pulpit at St Nicholas, Oldbury



The bell tower at St Nicholas, Oldbury. The bell was made around 1440 in London and is rung by a rope inside the church, situated by the organ.



St Nicholas is considering various ideas for the future development of the church, including removal of the pews to create a space for meetings, concerts and exhibitions.



A beautifully carved oak door to the chancel at St Nicholas, Oldbury.



Choir Stalls at St Nicholas, Oldbury.



The modern font at Oldbury. Matthew 19:14 – 'Suffer the little children and forbid them not to come unto me for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven'.

GLAZELEY AND DEUXHILL

Our next church lies south of Oldbury on the B4363 that leads from Bridgnorth to Cleobury Mortimer. It is a beautiful Grade II listed church, designed by Sir Arthur Blomfield and rebuilt in 1875. It is believed to be the site of a church since the 11th century that was referred to in the Domesday Book. It retains many features from its predecessors including a 12th century font.



St Bartholomew's, Glazeley and Deuxhill. Built in 1875, on the site of previous churches.

Alas, the church was closed and there was no contact information on display in the porch. However the surrounding area is extremely pleasant and there is an old red telephone box and a war memorial nearby.



A red telephone box at Glazeley.



War memorial, Glazeley.

BILLINGSLEY

Further south on the B4364 to Cleobury Mortimer, six miles south of Bridgnorth, is the church of St Mary, Billingsley serving a small rural parish with a population of 150. Built in 1140 and Grade II listed, Billingsley Church has many ancient features, including an Easter Sepulchre (the only church in Shropshire with one), a Norman doorway and ancient yew trees.



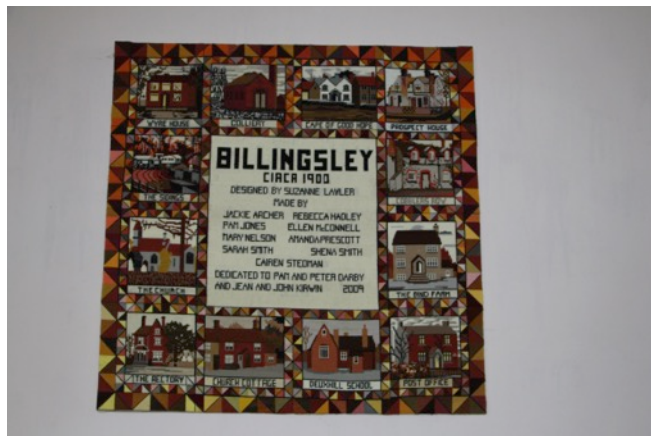
St Mary's Church, Billingsley.



There are two especially fine yew trees in Billingsley churchyard, one male, one female. They both have a girth of over 20ft, which means they are ancient yews, centuries old. They are listed in the National Register of Ancient Yews, mentioned in Andrew Morton's 'Trees of Shropshire'.



The nave and chancel at St Mary, Billingsley.



Billingsley 1900, a tapestry hanging in Billingsley church.



Another tapestry depicting today's Billingsley - at St Mary's Church.



In the north wall of the chancel is a fine, 14th Century 'Easter Sepulchre' built to house the consecrated host between Maundy Thursday and Easter Day.



Medieval porch at Billingley.

A notable resident was the first Englishman ever to learn Chinese, Dr. Thomas Hyde, who was born in Billingsley on 29th June 1636. He was Professor of Arabic and Hebrew at Oxford University, and Head of the Bodleian Library.

He also contributed towards “Walton’s Polyglot”, a version of the Bible in nine Eastern languages. His father, Ralph Hyde M.A., was Rector of Billingsley church from 1623-1632.

CHELMARSH

Our final church on this outing covering some of the churches south of Bridgnorth was **St Peter's Chelmarsh**. On a previous visit we weren't able to view inside - however this time fortunately the door was open - and it proved to be well worth coming back! It's a Grade I listed church with Norman origins, with interesting carvings on the oak structures in the chancel and sanctuary. They date from 1887-89 and were created by local boys taught by the vicar.



Lych gate at Chelmarsh. The inscription is from Psalm 96:8 - 'Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name: bring an offering, and come into his courts.'



The tower at St Peter's Chelmarsh, which dates from 1704.



The porch at St Peter's, Chelmarsh with the Cross Keys of St Peter and his Papal Mitre.



The nave and chancel at Chelmarsh, which date from 1345.



Wheeled hearse, St Peter's Chelmarsh.



Reredos at St Peter's Chelmarsh.



Intricate carving to the choir stalls, carried out under the direction of the vicar in the 19th century.



The end of our trip – sitting on the Millennium commemorative bench at Chelmarsh.

Martin and Magda Jones

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Sources of information for this article:

[Guide to Shropshire Churches:](#)

<http://www.discovershropshirechurches.co.uk/content/pages/documents/1343222524.pdf>

Leaflet about St Nicholas' Church, Oldbury.

Leaflet about St Mary's Church, Billingsley - Website: stmarys-billingsley.org.uk