

**Days Out with a Religious Connection.**  
**Diocese of Worcester: St Mary's, Ripple; Great Malvern Priory Church**



**An ancient prayer cross and stocks (bottom left) in the beautiful village of Ripple, Worcestershire.**

Our intention this year was to explore the **Diocese of Worcester's** picturesque and historic churches for our **'Days Out from Sedgley with a Religious Connection'** series of articles. Sadly we have done fewer days than we wished – we wanted to do an exhibition to complement the **'Sacred Shropshire'** show we arranged last Christmas (2016) at **All Saints' Christmas Tree Festival**. There's a link to outings we've so far managed to complete at the end of this article. This time we headed southwest on the M5 and M50. The small village of **Ripple** in the Deanery of Upton can be found just north of the M50 – come off at Junction 1 on the M50 and head north on the A38 towards Malvern before turning left after about a mile to Ripple. (The name Ripple is a Jutish word, 'Rippel', meaning a strip of land; there's also a 'St Mary's, Ripple' in Kent.)



The sign outside St Mary's Church in Ripple.

We chose a beautiful sunny autumn day to visit. There's a large car park and the church is well set back within a substantial churchyard. It's said to be the biggest medieval church in Worcestershire and one of Simon Jenkins' '1000 Best Churches'.



**The churchyard at St Mary's, Ripple.**

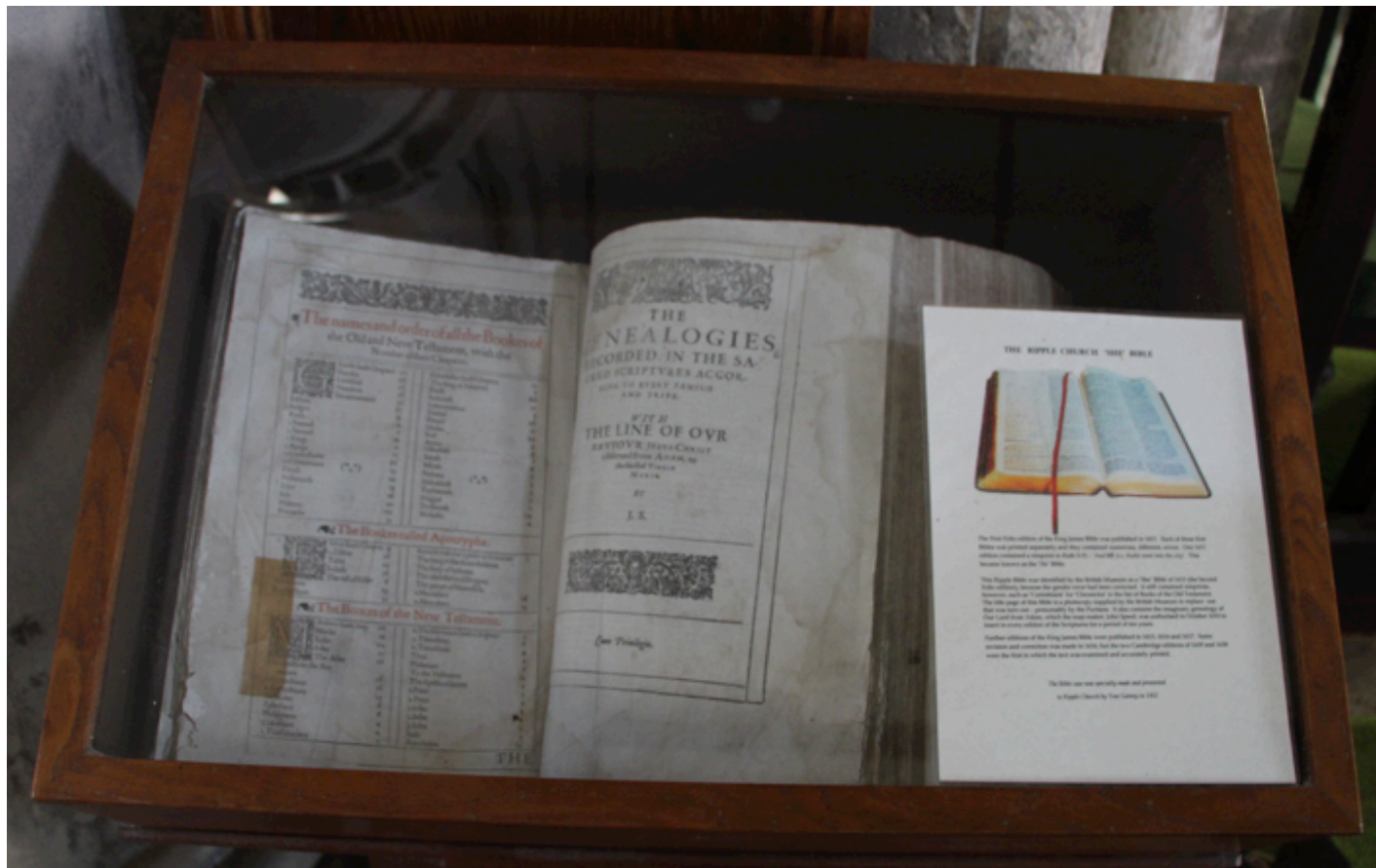




**The tower at St Mary's, Ripple.**

The tower, transepts nave and aisles date from the late 12<sup>th</sup> century, but the chancel was rebuilt in the 13<sup>th</sup> century.





The 'She' Bible

An edition of the King James Bible is on show in a glass case within the church. The edition at St Mary's is what is now termed a '**She**' Bible, because a misprint referring to Ruth in Ruth 3:15 as 'He' in the 1611 First Folio Edition was corrected in the Second Folio Edition of 1632 to 'She'.

One of the most celebrated features of the church are the misericords, made locally by craftsmen who were interested in recording typical local village activities that took place over the months of the year.

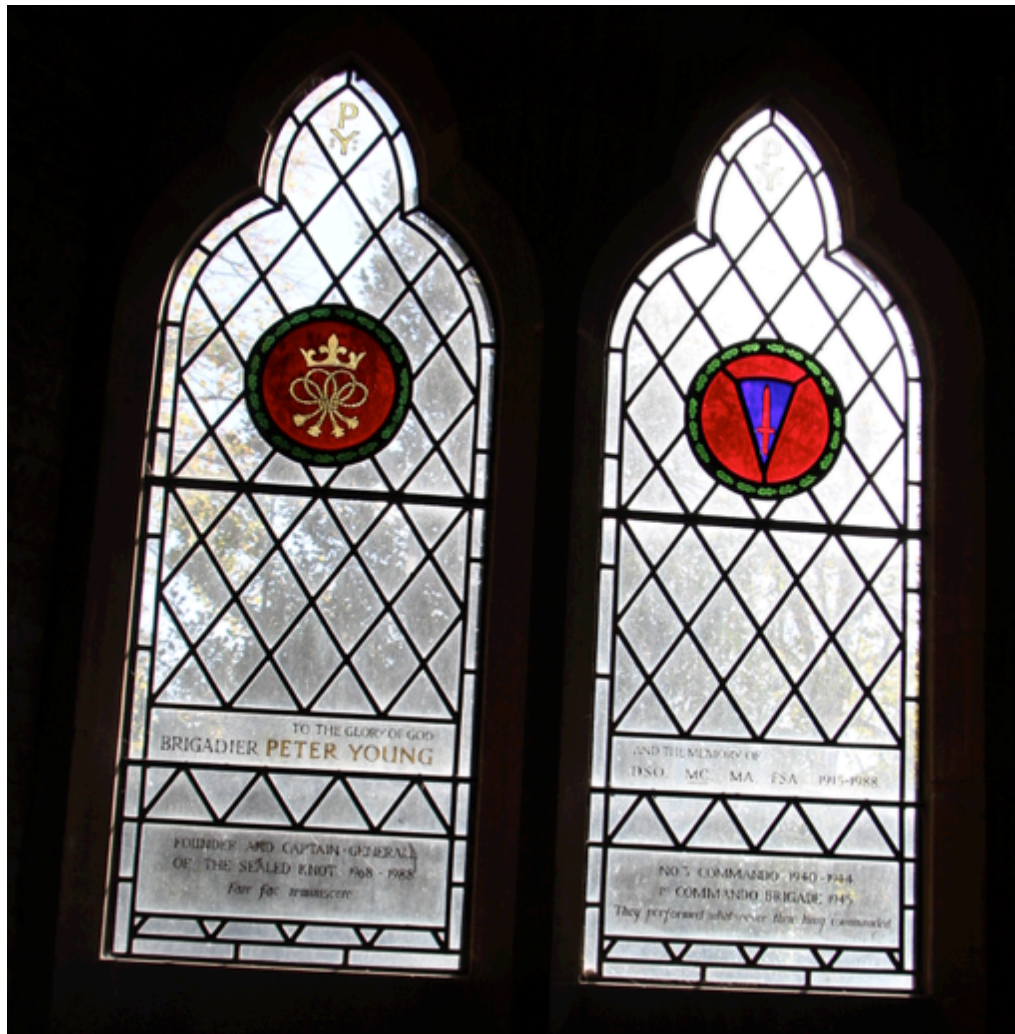


One of the misericords at St Mary's, Ripple. This appears to depict fishing in the nearby River Severn.



The misericords have modern day 'kneelers' – also featuring aspects of medieval village life.





Two adjoining windows within the church are devoted to the memory of Brigadier Peter Young, founder of the Sealed Knot - the historical reenactment society - who died in 1988. He lived in the village of Ripple and worshipped at the church.



The altar and east window by Herbert W. Bryans (1909) at St Mary's, Ripple.



Magda looks through the postcards of the Misericords on sale at the back of St Mary's.



We then drove northwards to Great Malvern, to view the Priory which is over 925 years old. Not long after the Battle of Hastings St Wulfstan, the Bishop of Worcester, encouraged a monk called Aldwin, to found a monastery in what was then the Malvern Chase.

The building is no longer a priory, having been dissolved during the Reformation. It now serves as a Parish Church, bought by the people of Great Malvern in 1541 for £20 to save it from destruction.



Entering the grounds of Great Malvern Priory.



**A first view of the very impressive Great Malvern Priory.**

Between 1348 and 1350 the Black Death reduced the number of monks at the priory to 10, as they looked after the dying and presumably perished themselves in the process. In 1440 the Priory was redeveloped over a span of 60 years, and a new West Window was given by Richard of Gloucester, later Richard III. Originally called the 'doom' window, it depicted the day of Judgement.



The altar, reredos and the magnificent east window at Great Malvern Priory.

The East Window is the largest window in any English parish church. It dates from the early 15th century and was probably glazed by John Thornton of Coventry. The tracery features the Annunciation along with the Apostles and other Saints, including St Wulfstan, Bishop of Worcester. There are also symbols of the four Evangelists. The main part of the window has 24 scenes depicting the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Jesus. The window may have been given by Richard Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick, and his wife Isabella Despenser around 1430.





**The Knotsford Monument. John Knotsford who died in 1580 was a wealthy man of Malvern who purchased the priory's land and buildings after the Dissolution of the Monasteries in 1539. The tomb was erected by his daughter Anne who is seen kneeling in prayer beside John and his wife.**



Ceiling tiles at Great Malvern Priory installed during the restoration of 1860.





Examples of medieval wall tiles at Great Malvern Priory, manufactured locally.





The clappers of the old bells at Great Malvern Priory, displayed in a montage in the porch.



**The stained glass window at Malvern Priory, by Thomas Denny.**

The Friends of Malvern Priory donated the windows, which celebrate the Millennium. They can be found in the north choir. Their theme is Psalm 36. Denny has used the Malvern Hills as part of his inspiration as well as colours which echo the medieval windows.





Another window by Tom Denny inspired by Psalm 36, at Great Malvern Priory.



We enjoyed immensely our Day Trip to the **Upton and Malvern Deaneries**, but are keenly aware that we only scratched the surface of the riches to be found in landscape and architecture. We plan to return soon.



The Malvern Museum in Great Malvern is located in the Abbey Gateway, the former gateway to Great Malvern Priory.

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Corrections welcome.

**Information sources:**

Church leaflet at St Mary's Ripple.

Church leaflet at Great Malvern Priory.

<http://www.greatmalvernpriory.org.uk/history/>

Priory East window: Geograph - <https://www.geograph.org.uk/snippet/12083>

Priory stained glass: <https://thehistoryjar.com/2016/08/26/stained-glass-in-great-malvern-priory/>

<http://www.greatmalvernpriory.org.uk/history/>

Glass in Malvern Priory:

<https://thehistoryjar.com/2016/08/26/stained-glass-in-great-malvern-priory/>

Other travelogues for 'Days Out with a religious theme' can be found here:

<http://gornalandsedgley.org.uk/days-out/>