

= St Mary 's Church , Nether Alderley =

St Mary 's Church is an Anglican church at the end of a lane to the south of the village of Nether Alderley , Cheshire , England . It dates from the 14th century , with later additions and a major restoration in the late @-@ 19th century . The church is recorded in the National Heritage List for England as a designated Grade I listed building .

The church was built in the Gothic style , and has historically been associated with the Stanley family of Alderley . Its major features include a fine tower , the Stanley pew which is entered by an outside staircase , a 14th @-@ century font , the western gallery , and monuments to the Lords Stanley of Alderley . The grounds contain a 17th @-@ century former schoolhouse , now used as a parish hall , a medieval church cross , and the Stanley Mausoleum , which dates from 1909 . An ancient yew tree stands in the churchyard .

St Mary 's is an active parish church in the diocese of Chester , the archdeaconry of Macclesfield , and the deanery of Knutsford . Its benefice is combined with that of St Catherine 's , Birtles .

= = History = =

The oldest parts of the church date from around 1300 , but it is likely that a timber @-@ framed church existed on the site before then . The church 's original dedication was to Saint Lawrence , but that was later changed to Saint Mary . A clerestory was added in the 15th century . The tower was built in 1530 , and the Stanley pew was added in about 1600 . The west gallery , which contained an organ , was installed in 1803 . In 1856 , the chancel was completely rebuilt , to a design by Cuffley and Starkey , paid for by the Stanley family . The vestry was constructed in 1860 . The church was restored between 1877 and 1878 by Paley and Austin ; the nave floor was lowered , the pulpit was replaced , plaster was removed from the roof and the walls , and the box pews were replaced by new oak pews . The tower clock , made in 1743 , was renovated in 1997 . In 2000 , the 16th @-@ century wooden bell @-@ frame was strengthened by the addition of a steel frame , and the Stanley pew was restored .

= = Architecture = =

= = = Exterior = = =

St Mary 's is built of ashlar buff and red sandstone quarried locally at Alderley Edge , and the roof is of Kerridge stone slates . Its plan consists of a tower at the west end , a four @-@ bay nave with north and south aisles , a chancel with a vestry to its north , and a south porch . Over the north aisle is a dormer window . The tower has diagonal buttresses . Its west door has 14th @-@ century mouldings and above the door is a three @-@ light window . The stage above this contains ringers ' windows on the north and west faces and a diamond @-@ shaped clock on the south face . Above these the belfry windows on all faces have two lights . The top of the tower is embattled and contains the bases of eight pinnacles . Below the parapet is a string course with large grotesque gargoyles . At the west end of the nave roof is a bellcote . The Stanley pew projects to the east of the south porch . In the porch are grooves which were cut where arrows were sharpened .

= = = Interior = = =

The barrel @-@ shaped nave roof dates possibly from the early 16th century . The early 17th @-@ century Stanley pew at the eastern end of the south aisle is at the level of an upper storey , and is entered by a flight of steps from outside the church . Its front is richly carved and displays six panels with coats of arms . Richards states that it is one of the finest of its kind in the country and that it is unique in Cheshire . At the west end of the church is a late @-@ 18th @-@ century musicians ' gallery , whose front panel has painted coats of arms . The gallery contains the organ which

replaces an earlier organ . This was presented by Lady Fabia Stanley in 1875 and was made by Hill and Company of London at a cost of £ 350 (equivalent to £ 30 @, @ 000 in 2015) , An oak document chest in the tower has been dated to 1686 . The 14th @-@ century font was buried in the churchyard during the Commonwealth , dug up in 1821 and restored to use in the church in 1924 . It consists of a plain circular bowl on four short cylindrical columns with moulded bases . Richards considers it to be one of the finest examples of 14th @-@ century work in Cheshire . The church has two old Bibles , a Vinegar Bible and a Breeches Bible .

The chancel contains memorials to the Lords Stanley of Alderley . The memorial to John Stanley , 1st Baron Stanley of Alderley contains his effigy dressed in peer 's robes lying under a canopy with his hand on a book , dated 1856 and by Richard Westmacott . On the other side of the chancel is a memorial to his son Edward Stanley , his effigy holding a scroll in his hand and with a dog at his feet . Engraved in brass on the side of the memorial are the figures of his widow and children . Lady Stanley is seated in the middle with their four surviving sons on her right , five surviving daughters on her left and three children who had died at a young age at her knee and on her lap . A memorial tablet to John Constantine Stanley , who died in 1878 , is by Joseph Boehm . The chancel contains a monument to Rev. Edward Shipton , rector of the church from 1625 to 1630 .

The stained glass in the east window , dated 1856 , was made by William Wailes . The glass in a south window in the chancel of 1909 was made by Morris & Co . The east window in the north aisle , dated 1920 is by Irene Dunlop . The stained glass window to the left of the pulpit was donated by the Greg family of Styal Mill . The stained glass in the window at the west end of the north aisle is to the memory of the wife of Edward John Bell , rector from 1870 to 1907 , and was made by Clayton and Bell in 1877 . The tower holds a ring of six bells , hung for change ringing , five of which were cast in 1787 by Rudhall of Gloucester , and the sixth by Charles and George Mears at the Whitechapel Bell Foundry in 1847 . A seventh , unused , bell dates from 1686 and has been noted as being of historical importance by the Church Buildings Council of the Church of England . The parish registers begin in 1629 , and the churchwardens ' accounts in 1612 .

= = External features = =

The sandstone schoolhouse in the churchyard was built in 1628 ; the school room was on the ground floor and the schoolmaster 's accommodation was above . A large room was added to the rear in 1817 , and in 1908 the building was restored and presented to the parish by Lord Stanley . It is now used as a parish hall and is listed Grade II * .

The medieval church cross in the churchyard , the Stanley Mausoleum , and the churchyard walls , gate piers and gates , are Grade II listed .

The mausoleum was built in 1909 by Edward Lyulph , 4th Lord Stanley . He died in 1925 and it contains his ashes and those of his wife , Mary Katherine , who died in 1929 . The mausoleum is built in ashlar buff and red sandstone with a Kerridge stone @-@ slate roof . It was designed in the neo @-@ Jacobean style by Paul Phipps , and is rectangular in shape , with two storeys and a three @-@ bay north front . The central bay contains a door , above which is the Stanley crest , a three @-@ light window and a date plaque in the gable . On the sides of the upper storey are three four @-@ light windows . Inside the mausoleum is a white marble sarcophagus . The yew tree in the churchyard is 1 @, @ 200 years old .

= = Rediscovery of the crypt = =

It had been known that under the church was a vault containing the remains of some members of the Stanley family but its whereabouts were not known until they were discovered by an architect in 2007 . A stone slab was removed exposing steps leading to a crypt under the chancel . This contained six coffins , four of which contained the bodies of the first and second Lords Stanley and their wives . Once the details had been recorded , the crypt was resealed .

= = Present activities = =

St Mary 's holds a variety of Anglican services on Sundays and offers a range of church activities . The church is open to visitors at advertised times and guided tours are available . A parish magazine is published monthly .