

St Mary's is a beautiful flint church surrounded by a lovely, peaceful churchyard.

Today as you enter through the south porch, you can see into the church through the glass door and you step into a welcoming, light space.

In 2011 the interior of the church was renewed: the floor of the nave was replaced with Portland stone and under-floor heating installed. New, comfortable seating was provided and a new AV system was put in. Kitchen facilities were also fitted in the north aisle. The chancel floor was extended on a dais out towards the nave. This completed a major project to provide modern facilities in this medieval building.



In 2008, the Chapter House, an extension on the north side of the church, was built to offer a parish office, vestry, toilets and meeting room. The purpose of this renewal was to make the church welcoming and open to the whole community.



Evidence unearthed during this building work shows there has been a church on this site since Saxon times. Over the succeeding generations many changes have been made to make the church fit to serve its community. The earliest written record of a church here is from the 12th century. It probably consisted of just a nave and chancel. About 1250 this church was enlarged by the addition of aisles on the north and south sides of the nave. You can still see the eight central, octagonal pillars which were built at this time to replace the walls. A few years later the church was extended at the western end and the 2 pillars at that end are in a different style. The tower was also built at this time to house six bells. In January 1804 the tower suddenly collapsed. The bells were sold to pay for the rebuilding. The tower now houses two tolling bells.

In 1868 the architect Arthur Blomfield carried out the next major restoration. He put in a new, higher roof, and the round windows above the nave, and a chamber on the north side of the chancel to house an organ. He removed the wall, which until then had separated the chancel from the nave, put in the 2 round pillars at the east end of the nave, and rebuilt the north wall and door. The current font also dates from this time.

The next rebuilding took place in 1908, when the upper part of the tower was replaced and the current Bath stone spire set up. Including the weather vane on the top, it is 135 feet tall. In 1916 the brightly coloured screen (reredos) behind the altar was given in memory of a former Rector. The area around the altar (sanctuary) remains mostly unchanged, with the coloured Victorian floor tiles still in place.



So, today St Mary's reflects its long history; a medieval church that still stands in the centre of the town and offers a peaceful, prayerful atmosphere. Much of what you see inside shows Victorian influence but it has been renewed in the 21st century to meet the needs of today's community.



**A Short History of St Mary's
Princes Risborough**