

The Saints on the gold medallions in the church represent the parishes of the Warwick Deanery, the medieval churches of Warwick and the three martyrs of the Protestant Reformation

Information about the medieval churches has been taken from A History of the County of Warwick: Volume 8, the City of Coventry and Borough of Warwick. Originally published by Victoria County History, London, 1969.

<https://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/warks/vol8/pp522-535>

BACKGROUND TO WARWICK'S MEDIIEVAL CHURCHES

THE mother church of Warwick in early times seems to have been All Saints, which stood within the castle precincts. It's exact location is not known but stone coffins are said to have been found and one, probably of the 12th century, was preserved at the castle.



In 1123, however, Roger de Beaumont, Earl of Warwick, completed the foundation planned and begun by his father of a college at St. Mary's and the church of All Saints was united with it. The college was at the same time granted seven other Warwick churches - St. Nicholas's, St. Lawrence's, St. Michael's, St. Sepulchre's, St. Helen's, St. John's, and St. Peter's. Each church had its own rector and kept it's tithes but gave part of its income to St. Mary's. St. Helen's, which had stood on the site of the priory and was presumably replaced by St. Sepulchre's, is not mentioned again.

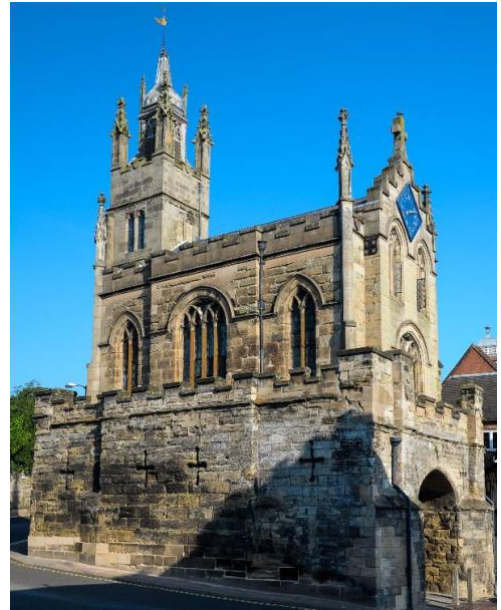
The college strengthened its rights in 1367 when the bishop ordered that the churches of St. John, St. Michael, St. Lawrence, St. Peter, and St. James - mostly in a ruinous condition or lacking churchyards - need no longer be repaired; their parishioners were instructed to attend St. Mary's and all burial grounds were to be closed except those of St. Mary's and St. Nicholas's. Final appropriation took place after the surrender or death of the rector of each church.



Thus by the end of the 14th century the town was divided between the two parish churches of St. Mary and, subordinate to it, St. Nicholas. These were sometimes called, with reference to their situations, the High Church and the Low Church. The parish of St. Mary included the walled town and the land to the west, that of St. Nicholas the land to the north and east and on the south side of the River Avon. One medieval institution, the chantry chapel at Guy's Cliffe in St. Nicholas's parish, remained independent of the two chief churches. Additional churches were not needed until the population of Warwick increased in the 19th century: St. Paul's was built in 1844 and All Saints in 1861

ST PETER

The church of St. Peter was granted to St. Mary's College in 1123 and was united with it in 1367. It originally stood in High Street at or near the corner with Castle Street and was probably removed at some date between 1422 and 1426. A chapel dedicated to St. Peter was then built over the East Gate.



ST. HELEN

The church of 'St. Sepulchre and St. Helen' was granted to St. Mary's College in 1123, but no more is heard of St. Helen's. It stood on the site later occupied by St. Sepulchre's Priory the erection of which began in 1109



ST MICHAEL

The church of St. Michael was granted to St. Mary's College in 1123 and was united with it in 1367. It appears subsequently to have become the chapel of the nearby hospital of St. Michael. The church stood outside the town walls on the north-west, in the Saltisford. The building is shown on a map of 1654. The remains have been incorporated in an 18th-century cottage: they include parts of the stone walls, the west gable-end, and the east end and east window.

ST. LAWRENCE

The church of St. Lawrence was granted to St. Mary's College in 1123 and was united with it in 1367. St. Lawrence's apparently continued in use as a church for some time after its appropriation to St. Mary's, and the building was still standing in 1632. It was outside the town walls, in West Street; when the road was widened in 1837 the churchyard was discovered, and a Norman capital found. The road opposite, St Laurence Avenue, was named after it.

ST. JOHN

The church of St. John is first mentioned in 1123 By the late 15th century the church housed the grammar school and it apparently continued to be so used until the Dissolution. It is shown as a small building, without a tower, to the south of the Booth Hall (which stood in market Place). It appears to have been demolished before 1711, though it was not burnt during the fire of 1694.

ST. JAMES

The chapel of St. James was granted to St. Mary's College between 1123. At its foundation in 1383, the Guild of St. George was licensed to have a chantry with two chaplains in St. James's. The Guild of Warwick still maintained one priest there in 1545. After the Dissolution, St. James's passed with St. Mary's College to the corporation, which also acquired the adjoining Guildhall and its ancillary buildings. In 1571, both chapel and buildings were granted to the Earl of Leicester so that he might found his hospital there. The chapel still forms part of the hospital.



The chapel stands over West Gate, at the end of High Street. The early chapel was perhaps rebuilt by Thomas Beauchamp II at the same time as he built the Guildhall in the late 14th century. In the 15th century both the chapel and the gate beneath it were extended by the addition of a square west tower with angle buttresses and parapet. The large Perpendicular west window of the chapel is at the middle stage of the tower with the arch of the gate below and a belfry above. Later restorations have destroyed almost all the original features in the body of the chapel. It was largely rebuilt in the 18th century. The building was completely restored in 1863-5 by Sir Gilbert Scott. His work included a new east window of five lights and two-light Gothic windows in the side walls. The former parapet walks along the south and east sides of the chapel were rebuilt so that there could be a south as well as a north entrance; the south walk was spanned by five flying buttresses. During the restoration the stones of a 12th-century arch were found under the floor and were re-erected in the master's garden at the hospital.

<https://www.lordleycester.com/>

ST. NICHOLAS

The church of St. Nicholas was in 1123 granted to St. Mary's College. Little is known of the old church, which consisted of nave, chancel, west tower, spire, and north porch. It was said to have been very large, and to have had round-headed doors and windows. There was a clock in the tower which may have been installed in 1562 and a cross stood in the churchyard. When a brief was issued in 1776 for its rebuilding, the church was described as very ancient apart from the tower and spire; these had been rebuilt c. 1750. The present church was erected in 1779-80.



ST MARY MAGDALENE

The chapel of Guy's Cliffe, standing on a steep slope overlooking the River Avon, 1½ mile north-east of the town, is dedicated to St. Mary Magdalene. The legend is that in Saxon times a hermit lived in a cave there; the legendary Guy of Warwick is reported to have retired to live there and to have given it its name. A hermit was living there in 1334. The hermitage became the property of St. Sepulchre's Priory but was given to the Earl of Warwick by 1422 in exchange for land nearer the town. In 1408 the hermit received a stipend of £5 from the Earl of Warwick. In 1423 Richard, Earl of Warwick founded a chantry in honour of God and St. Mary in the chapel and granted property worth £16 to two chaplains. In his will Richard directed that the chapel and other buildings should be rebuilt and this was finished in 1460. After the dissolution of the chantry the chapel was granted in 1547 to Sir Andrew Flammock. It descended with the rest of the estate to the Percy family who held it until 1946.

[Guy's Cliffe estate was broken up and sold in 1947. In 1952 the mill became a pub and restaurant and was named The Saxon Mill, the stables became a riding school, the kitchen garden became a nursery, all of which still exist today. In 1955 the house was purchased by Aldwyn Porter and the chapel leased to the Freemasons, establishing a connection with the Masons that remains today. *Wikipedia*]

The chapel of St. Mary Magdalene stands on the cliff to the west of Guy's Cave. It consists of two parallel aisles of five bays, with a porch and small tower at the centre of the 'south' wall. Under the building is a rock-cut passage which was extended c. 1825 and fitted with a carved 15th-century door brought from Wellesbourne church. It is not known when the chapel was first built but evidence suggests the 13th century. Inside the chapel, carved out of the rock face against which it is built, is a standing figure in armour, nearly 9 ft. high, representing Guy of Warwick. The carving is thought to date from the 14th century,

