

1 St. Michael & All Angels, Alberbury (Grade II*)

Head out of Shrewsbury on the A485, turn off right to Four Crosses on the B4393. In the village of Alberbury turn right at the War Memorial and park considerably in the road, or park at the village hall before the War Memorial and walk to the turning and the short distance to the church. **Open Saturdays 10am – 4pm, Easter to end of October.**

This ancient British church sits on the border of Wales next to the grounds of Loton Park, home of the Leighton family. It may have a Pre-Saxon foundation but was rededicated to St. Michael & All Angels in 1290.



Photo: © John Salmon



Photo: © Rod Trevaskus

Highlights:

- The finest saddleback roof in Shropshire, dating from the 1200s.
- The 13th century Great Tower has a distinct defensive appearance.
- The Art Nouveau style stained glass window in the Loton Chapel is a memorial to Sir Baldwyn Leighton of Loton Park. Designed by his daughter Barbara Sotheby it is influenced by Edward Burne Jones, a friend of the Leighton family.
- The Commandments, Our Father and Creed appear on unusual zinc scrolls which line the arches of the chancel windows.

Next to the church, on private land but visible from the road, are the remains of Alberbury Castle which dates back to around 1220 or possibly even earlier. The church stands on the edge of Loton Park, the ancestral home of the Leighton family for over 300 years. Loton Hall is available as a wedding and business venue. The park is the location of several motorsport events including the British Hill Climb Championship.

Three special churches on the Shropshire Borders



Photo: © www.oswestry-borderland-heritage.co.uk

2 St. Peter's Church, Melverley (Grade II)

Continue along the B4393 in the direction of Four Crosses through Coedway. At Crew Green turn right for Melverley. **Open daily.**

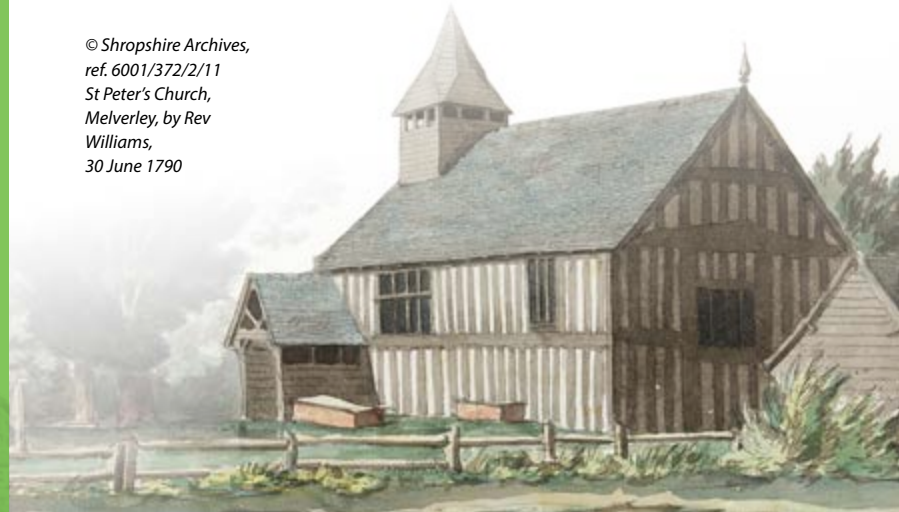
Here at the confluence of the Rivers Vyrnwy and Severn the border of England and Wales wriggles around so you never know which side you're on. On the English bank of the Vyrnwy on Shropshire soil stands St. Peter's Church, distinctive in black and white. The church was built in 1406 just five years after the earlier church was burnt down by Owain Glyndwr. The church you see today is substantially as it was built, a rare example of early British churches made of timber, wattle and daub, pegged together with not a single nail used.

Highlights:

- The stunning riverside setting and timber construction.
- The font is Saxon and remains from the pre 1406 church.
- The altar and pulpit are Jacobean.
- On the lectern is a chained bible from 1727 – as more people learned to read bibles were often chained to prevent them from being 'borrowed'.

The '**Severn Way**' Long Distance Footpath passes close to the church. The footpath is 224 miles long, starting from the source of the River Severn on Plynlimon Hill in Mid Wales and ending at Bristol where the Severn meets the sea.

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St Peter's Church,
Molverley, by Rev
Williams,
30 June 1790



3 St. Michael the Archangel, Llanymynech (Grade I)

From Molverley drive back to the B4393 and continue west towards Llandrinio. Turn right onto the A483 heading north towards Oswestry. Pass through Llanymynech and Pant to the cross roads at Llyncllys. Turn left onto the A495. Continue through Porthywaen. Where the A495 bears left take the right hand fork on the B4396. Look out for a left turn onto a minor road to Llanymynech. Take care on the narrow lane and keep right at the first turning, then left to the little car parking area below the church. You'll have crossed the border several times during your day! **Open daily.**

Like Molverley, the church at Llanymynech is very close to the England/Wales border. It was on the Welsh side of Offa's Dyke when established in the 1100's but the border shifted in 1536 and St. Michael the Archangel is now in England without having moved at all. The present incarnation of the church is almost exclusively the work of Rev John Parker who became its vicar in 1844. He was a gothic enthusiast, a gifted watercolour painter, architect and engineer. He lavished money and talent on rebuilding parts of the church, adding the distinctive tower and interior painted decoration. The church is in an idyllic riverside spot and was described as 'bizarre' and 'unforgettable' by Pevsner.

Highlights

- The convex, octagonal tower designed by Rev Parker to give extra durability and strength on a difficult site.
- The unusual painted decorations and texts on the interior walls. These later offended the Victorians and were whitewashed over before being revealed again in the 1960's and restored recently with the help of the Heritage Lottery Fund.
- 14th century monumental slab in the south porch carved with a coursing hare.
- Memorial to Elias Owen (1833-1899), the Welsh antiquarian and author of "**Welsh Folklore**", published in 1887.
- The monument to Sir John Bridgeman by the celebrated eighteenth century Flemish sculptor John Rysbrack (born Jan Michiel Rijsbrack).

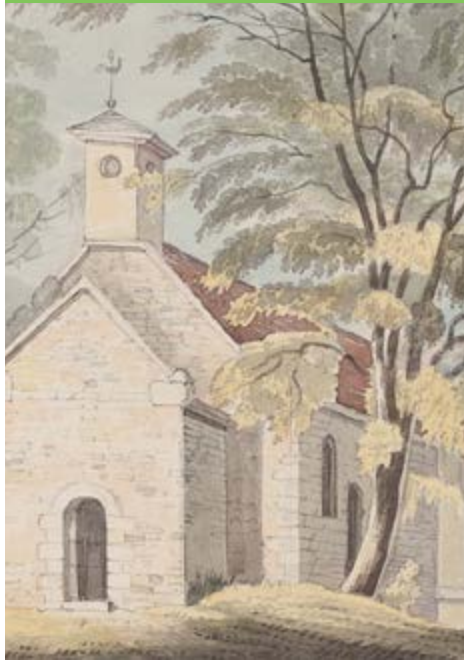
Walk

To make a longer exploration with more outdoor exercise add a 4 mile walk along tracks, green lanes and field paths around Ford. You'll need the book '**20 Walks around Shrewsbury**' written, researched and devised by Shropshire Ramblers.

Walk no. 4 is well signed and fairly easy - some muddy paths, a few stiles and modest gradients but no very steep hills. It passes through the pretty churchyard at Ford.

20 Walks around Shrewsbury is available to buy from Shrewsbury Visitor Information Centre, The Music Hall, The Square Tel: 01743 258888 or from www.shropshireramblers.org.uk

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by John Homes Smith



Eat and Drink

1. **Churncote Farm Shop & Butchery and The Cote Kitchen**
On the A458 between Shrewsbury and Ford. Car parking on site. The Farmshop & Butchery sells fresh meat and vegetables produced by the farm and a very good choice of other local food and drink products. The Cote Kitchen is a licensed restaurant specialising in cooking with produce from the farm and local area, also serving coffee, tea & cakes. www.churncote.co.uk
2. **The Royal Hill**
From Molverley continue past the church. Turn right and keep right following signs to Edgerley and Pentre. The Royal Hill, Edgerley is on the left - an honest to goodness pub (with a campsite) serving Shropshire & borders real ales. There is a menu of pub grub and the location by the River Severn with views of the Breiddens is lovely. Expect unexpected displays of Morris dancing on occasion.
3. **The Hand & Diamond**
The Hand & Diamond is in Coedway not far from the turn for Molverley. It is a nice old inn with a menu of full meals and bar snacks including some local produce. Local ales are always available e.g. Woods of Shropshire. www.oldhandanddiamond.co.uk

These three, and many more churches, are members of the Shropshire Churches Tourism Group. More information at: www.discovershropshirechurches.co.uk

For more information about visiting this part of Shropshire go to www.oswestry-welshborders.org.uk or for Shropshire as a whole www.shropshiretourism.co.uk.

Produced by Shropshire Council Visitor Economy Team on behalf of Shropshire Borderlands Destination Partnership June 2015

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