



Parish Church Of St. Mary

The original church of St. Mary had stood for centuries before being demolished in 1784 because the new owner of Tedworth House, Thomas Assheton Smith considered it to be too close to his manor. However, the stones from this mediaeval church were used to build an alternative parish church on the other side of the road in the woods where it would be less conspicuous.

When, in 1878 the parish church was replaced by the present one, the former St. Mary's continued to be used for burials and subsequently became known as the Mortuary Chapel. The above photo was taken in the 1960s but the area has more recently been very much tidied up

The Tedworth estate was sold in 1876 to Sir John Kelk by Sloane Stanley who had inherited it from the widow of Thomas Assheton Smith. Sir John commissioned John Johnson, the architect who had designed Alexandra Palace in London, to produce plans for a new St Mary's and also for the renovation of Tedworth House at a total cost of £57,000 or the equivalent of about £5 million in today's currency. Although Johnson only designed about a dozen churches, St Mary's is arguably his finest and is widely regarded as a supreme example of Victorian ecclesiastical architecture.

The carving detail by Farmer and Brindley of London is superb, and extremely well preserved. The stained glass, much of it provided by the firm of Clayton and Bell, appears untouched by the passage of time, with clear, bright colours that make the interior a delightful wash of colours when the sun shines through the windows. Unfortunately, Johnson never saw the realisation of his design; he died before work on St Mary's was even begun, and the actual building work was carried out under the supervision by GH Gordon, a canon of Salisbury Cathedral.