About St Mary Magdalene
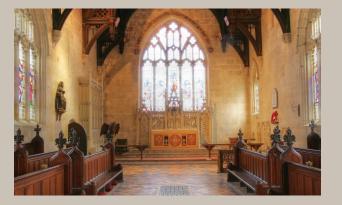
This imposing church stands as a memorial for those that died in the Battle of Shrewsbury. The battle was fought between the forces of Henry IV and the rebel army led by Henry 'Hotspur' Percy in 1403. On the eve of the feast day of St Mary Magdalene, the king triumphed and the rebel lords were executed.

The church was built soon after, between the years of 1406 and 1408; services are recorded from the beginning of 1409. The fabric survives unaltered, very rare for a medieval church which would typically be built, rebuilt and added onto for hundreds of years.

Originally founded as a chantry chapel to sing masses for those fallen in battle, it became a college of priests in 1410. Following the Chantries Act in 1547, the college, which was just south of the church, was demolished and its materials were sold off. The church and its land passed to the Corbet family in 1683.

The church was more or less derelict by the 18th century, but in 1860-62 restoration was carried out by Samuel Pountney Smith, a Shrewsbury architect. Most of the interior decoration and furnishings date to this time.

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Due to their age, historic church floors can be uneven and worn and lighting can be low level. Please take care, especially in wet weather when floors can be slippery.
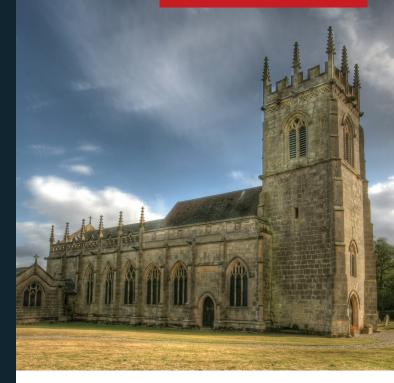
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Church of St Mary Magdalene

Battlefield

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The historic church of St Mary Magdalene

10 things to see before you leave...

1 Designed by Pountney Smith and made during the 1860 restoration, the **font** is embellished with floral motifs similar to those on the pulpit, also designed by Pountney Smith (see 3 below). The whereabouts of the medieval font is unknown.

2 The magnificent **hammerbeam roof**, dating to the 1860 restoration, incorporates the heraldry of knights who fought in the Battle of Shrewsbury along both sides. The original roof collapsed sometime in the mid 18th century.

3 The **pulpit**, designed by Pountney Smith, is decorated with a white marble panel showing Moses producing water by striking the rock at Horeb, while the elders of Israel look on. (Exodus 17.5).

4 Made during the 1860 restoration, the **screen** separates the chancel from the nave. During the medieval period, this would have acted as a boundary which the parishioners could not cross. However, the existence of a screen here during the Middle Ages, when the church functioned as a chantry chapel, is uncertain.

5 This **Pietà**, an image of Our Lady of Pity showing Mary holding the body of her son after his removal from the cross, is a rare survival from the 15th century. It came from Albright Hussey, a nearby chapel that fell into disuse after the Reformation.

6 The **reredos**, also designed by Pountney Smith, depicts scenes from the Life of Christ, including the Nativity, Crucifixion and Resurrection. The reredos became uncommon after the Protestant Reformation but was re-introduced during the Victorian period as a result of renewed interest in the religious architecture of the Middle Ages.

7 The **Sedilia** are decorated with simple quatrefoil tracery. These seats were used by priests, deacons and subdeacons when the church was a chantry chapel dedicated to singing masses to the souls of the fallen soldiers.

8 This elaborately carved **wall monument** commemorates the Corbet family, who paid for the bulk of the restoration in 1860. The adjacent vestry was originally a mortuary chapel for the family.

9 The **medieval stained glass** in the vestry dates from the 15th and 16th centuries. Some of the glass was brought to the church from Normandy, but some is original to this church.

10 Dating to the 1860 restoration of the church, these intricately carved **bench ends** decorating the choir stalls depict angels and eagles.

N

Tower   1   Nave   2 (Roof)   4   Chancel   5   8   6   9   3   10   7