

The church was built around 1010 and contains several Saxon Wall paintings – the only ones in the country still in situ.

## St. Peter, West Tytherley SP5 1JY

The present church replaced an old Norman building (the outline is still visible in the churchyard) and was completed in 1833. Various brasses and memorials were retained from the old building but the font had been missing since the time of the Commonwealth. It turned out that it was being used as a cattle trough (!) and has only recently been reinstated in the church.

The real distinction for St Peter's is that it has three bells, one of which was founded in 1260 and is believed to be the oldest bell in the world still being rung. (There is a bell in a museum in Sofia Bulgaria dated 1211, but it is not rung.)

## Stockbridge, Old St Peter SO20 6HH

As well as a 1354 oak door, there is a wall painting relating to the Spanish Armada dated 1588 and with the initials ER relating to Elizabeth the first. In 1563 she had granted Stockbridge the right to elect two MPs, so she was very popular.



## Hampshire and the Islands Historic Churches Trust **DAYS OUT:** *around North Hampshire*

These brief notes are intended to whet your appetite for the unusual and quirky secrets hidden in our churches. We have in Hampshire and the Islands the oldest bell in the world still being rung, Handel's organ, myriads of TV and Film locations and many other lovely oddities.

And, yes, please do tell us if you discover something we haven't spotted.

## West of Whitchurch

Yes – it's here that we have St Mary Mead church, Shakespeare's Virgin Crants and the oldest bell in the world still being rung. Most people assume that the A34 and the A303 cover the area in twenty minutes; in reality you could stay here a week and still miss some of the most special churches in the country.



Copy link to get map: <https://tinyurl.com/55d2e8hk>

## All Hallows, Whitchurch RG28 7AS

The original Saxon church was built from chalk – hence the name “White Church”. The later Norman church was virtually rebuilt by the Victorians, though they retained the oak stairs leading up to the tower. The earliest of the six bells was founded in the 15<sup>th</sup> century.

The remnant of the Saxon grave cover of Frithburga is one of the most striking monuments in the church. Buried more than 1000 years ago, Frithburga must have been a woman of some importance. Her name means “Pledge of Peace”.



## Abbotts Ann, St Mary the Virgin

SP11 7NR



By Hampshire village standards this is quite a new church, having been rebuilt in 1716.

It is famous for having the largest collection in the country of “Virgin Crants” (cf Ophelia in Hamlet) or Virgin Crowns – garlands awarded to maids and unmarried men who have



lived and died in the village. There are some 39 of these memorials hanging from brackets in the nave.

## Sandham Memorial Chapel, Burghclere

RG20 9JT



The chapel was built after the first world war to house 17 paintings by Stanley Spencer, following his experience as a medical orderly in Bristol, Farnham and then on the Macedonian front. Spencer referred to it as his “Holy Box”

It is now in the care of the National Trust and the gardens have views

over Watership Down.

## St Andrew, Nether Wallop SO20 8ET



Often called one of the prettiest villages in England, the “Wallop” derives from two Old English words “waella” and “hop”, meaning Valley of the Springing Water. The church of St Andrew is one of the best known in the world due to its use in the Joan Hickson adaptations of Miss Marple – this is the church of St Mary Mead!

BUT, on television, you never see one of the most distinctive elements of the churchyard – just by the tower is a curious memorial in the shape of a pyramid to Francis and Anne Dowse who died in the 1750s.