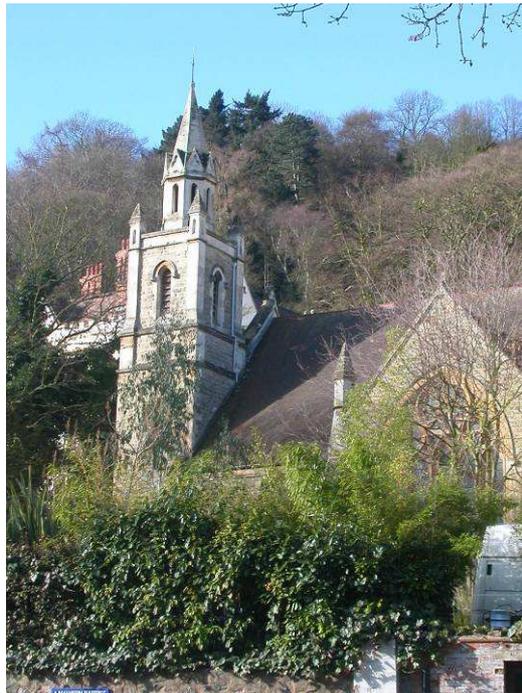




MALVERN CIVIC SOCIETY

MALVERN'S Victorian Churches [and later]



BY JOHN DIXON

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Author's Note

My work deals only with Victorian Churches [1837 – 1901] although I did include 1903 since it was a 'golden year' for Churches in Malvern.

Of course, Malvern and Little Malvern Priors have to be included but they are a study in themselves. The remnant of the old Newland Chapel is also an interesting Mediaeval survival.

Although this work includes only Malvern Churches, the visitor would be well advised to extend his pilgrimage to include the surrounding areas including:

Hanley Castle	Kempsey	Castlemorton	Birtsmorton	Bromsberrow	Bransford
Leigh	Alfrick	Eastnor	Guarlford	Hanley Swan	Cradley
Colwall	Welland	Storrige	Mathon		

To name a few

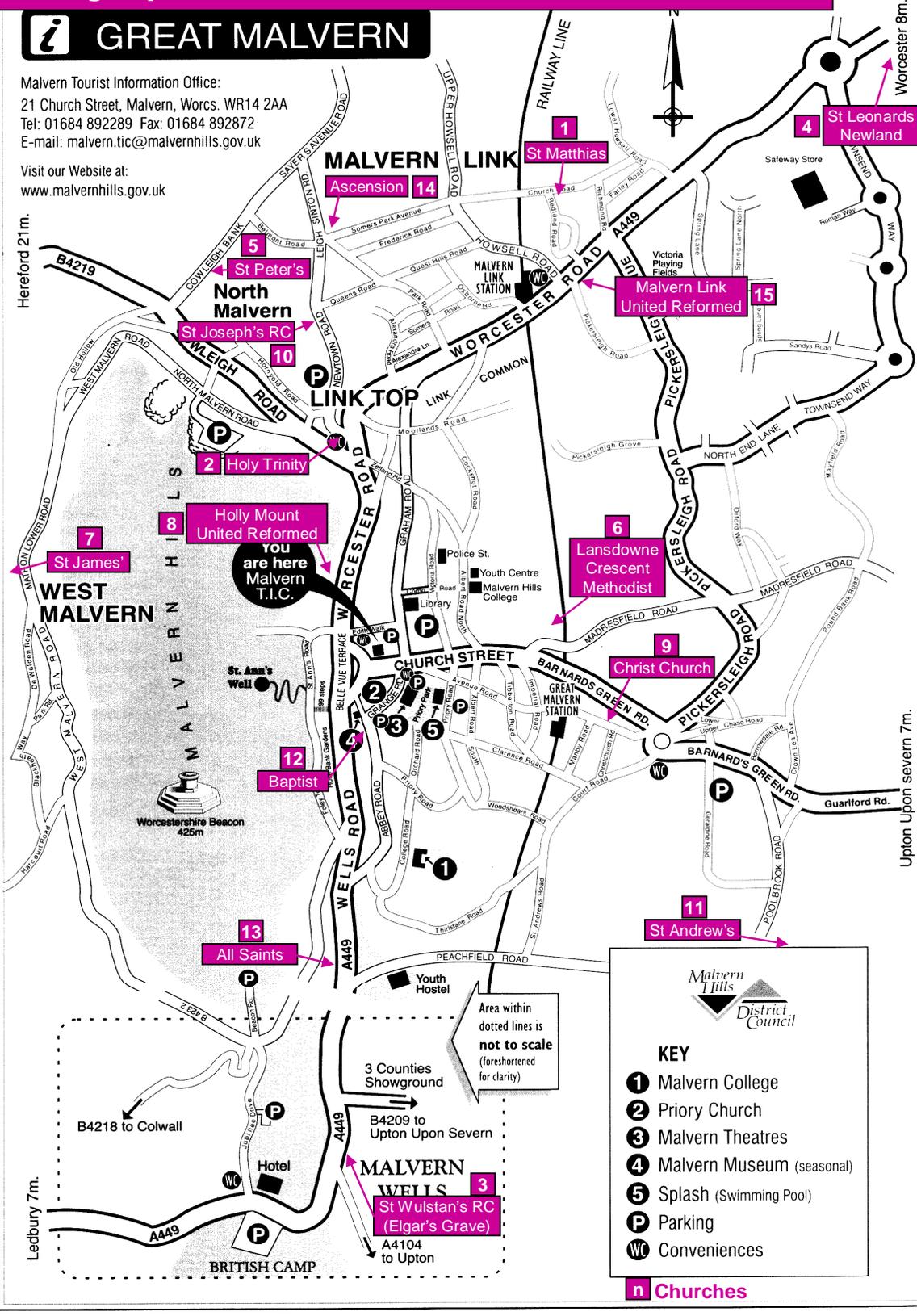
John Dixon
July 2009

Heritage Open Weekend 2007 - Malvern's Victorian Churches

GREAT MALVERN

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Malvern Hills District Council

KEY

- ① Malvern College
- ② Priors Church
- ③ Malvern Theatres
- ④ Malvern Museum (seasonal)
- ⑤ Splash (Swimming Pool)
- P Parking
- WC Conveniences
- n Churches

Area within dotted lines is not scale (foreshortened for clarity)

3 Counties Showground

B4209 to Upton Upon Severn

B4218 to Colwall

B4219

Hereford 21m.

Worcester 8m.

Upton Upon severn 7m.

Ledbury 7m.

BRITISH CAMP

Hotel

Youth Hostel

Police St.

Youth Centre

Malvern Hills College

Library

Victoria Playing Fields

Safetyway Store

Worcester 8m.

Upton Upon severn 7m.

Ledbury 7m.

BRITISH CAMP

Hotel

Youth Hostel

Police St.

Youth Centre

Malvern Hills College

Library

Victoria Playing Fields

Safetyway Store

Introduction

Malvern is a mecca for Church architectural enthusiasts – eighteen of the High Victorian Period the building of which paralleled the growth of the spa town – another six of the later C20 – and a fascinating collection of mediaeval village Churches.

Of many denominations - Church of England, Roman Catholic and Non-Conformist - they include buildings of national significance by leading architects of the day. Ranging from the powerful simplicity of St Andrew, Poolbrook to the lavish decoration of St Leonard, Newland; the High Victorian brilliance of St Peter, Cowleigh to the Arts and Crafts rigour of All Saints, Malvern Wells and the purity of The Church of the Ascension, Newtown, Malvern's Churches reflect the broad sweep of Victorian ecclesiastical architecture. The town provides a clear microcosm of changes in wider society and taste during the 19th century. The growth of population, industry and urbanisation; social aspiration and preoccupations with class and patronage; the new wealth of industry, trade and empire; the spiritual renewal and dynamism of Victorian Christian life all find expression in these Churches. As well as including individual examples of outstanding architecture, the buildings open this weekend also offer a rich review of decorative art, including stained glass, metalwork, wood carving, wall painting and textiles.



Malvern developed from being merely a large village in 1841, with a population of about 3000, into a prosperous Spa Town of 16,000 in 1901. In the 1830s, the Malvern area had only two Churches; the medieval Priory and a humble little chapel at Newland. By 1901, there were over twenty Churches and chapels, a continuing testament to the greatest century of Church building in our history.

1. St Peter, Malvern Wells

1836

First Malvern Church built in modern times. Designed by RW Jearrad of Cheltenham; converted to flats I 2003.

2. St Matthias, Malvern Link

1846

Like all the other Churches listed here, St Matthias is built in gothic style, the revived form of medieval architecture which became an essential expression of Christian renewal and morality in the Victorian period. The architectural history of this Church, however, is unusual. Designed originally in 1844-6 by Worcestershire architect, Harvey Eginton, and, a south aisle was added in 1858 This Church was then demolished and a new one designed by F W Hunt of London in 1880-1. It is large and impressive. The painted saints on the chancel screen are one of several reminders of the close association between St Matthias and the sisters of the Convent of the Holy Name, formerly in Ranelagh Road. From the outside, its tower is an important feature in the Link townscape.

3. Holy Trinity, Link Top

1851

Built on land given by Lady Foley and designed by the successful Cheltenham architect, Samuel Whitfield Dankes (who also designed Malvern's Abbey Hotel), it was enlarged in 1872 by the Haddon Brothers of Malvern. Viewed from Link Top in conjunction with its early 20th century hall, it forms an impressive architectural group. It was built to serve the new working class areas of North Malvern and Malvern Link. The top hat racks, though, still located under many of the pews, seem to suggest a reasonably well-off congregation. The East window is by Kempe

4. St Wulstan's Roman Catholic Church, Little Malvern **1862**

This Church is famous because the graves of Sir Edward and Lady Elgar lie in the Churchyard under the fine stone designed by Elgar's friend Troyte Griffith. However, the Church itself deserves to be much more widely known. The Beringtons of Little Malvern Court, who had kept the flame of Catholicism burning in the dark centuries of Catholic suppression, were keen to establish a parochial Church in the area. The outstandingly original Benjamin Bucknall planned a confident and ambitious building (over ambitious? – the eastern apse was never built) in 13th century French gothic style. Inside, the impression is light and lofty with a Lady Chapel splendidly glazed by the Birmingham firm of John Hardman & Co., and a little hexagonal baptistery (a later addition), which glows like a medieval manuscript.

5. St Leonard, Newland **1864**

When the 6th Earl Beauchamp built the community of almshouses in Newland, he commissioned the London architect Philip Hardwick to demolish the little Church there and replace it with an elaborate chapel for the community. It stands today as a remarkable example of Victorian taste and High Churchmanship. Every surface is carved or decorated. The font is ancient, and came from the little parish Church of St Thomas, which stood at the top of Church Street in Great Malvern until the Reformation.

6. St Peter, Cowleigh **1866**

St Peter's was designed by the great architect George Edmund Street when he was at the height of his powers. Built under the generous patronage of Earl Beauchamp as a daughter Church of West Malvern for the mainly working class district of Cowleigh, it became a parish Church in its own right in 1876. A relatively small building, inside it is surprisingly spacious and calm, with satisfying proportions and fine features. The building is designed in the High Church Anglican tradition, in which emphasis in worship is placed on the liturgy and sacraments, and the eye is drawn to the chancel and high altar. The plain but effective capitals for the nave arches and the pulpit with its arcade of coloured marble columns are typical of Street's work.

7. Methodist Church, Lansdowne Crescent **1866**

Like all Non-Conformist groups in Malvern, the Methodists had great difficulty in finding a site for their Church. Lady Foley owned much of the land, was staunchly Church of England, and did not wish Non Conformist buildings to intrude or compete with the primacy of the priory. Eventually Methodists were able to buy this site which was not owned by Lady Foley and they hired John Tarring, a London architect and prolific builder on Non Conformist Churches, who planned a light, open building in the Gothic style. The roof is supported by iron pillars which have decoration very like that on the pillars of Great Malvern Station, completed only four years earlier.

8. St James, West Malvern **1871**

A small, simple Church built in 1843 was one of the first 'new' Churches built in the Malvern area. It enabled the West Malvern villagers, who were in the parish of Mathon, to attend Church more easily. However, by 1870, it was considered too small for the growing population, and the present Church, designed by George Edmund Street, was built alongside it. This second Church was ambitious in its plan and proportions; the roof is very lofty and the windows, many of which are filled with excellent Victorian stained glass, are large. In the Churchyard is the tomb of Peter Mark Roget, the author of the eponymous 'Roget's Thesaurus', who lived here in his final years.

9. United Reformed Church, Holly Mount **1876**

How did the Congregationalists establish themselves on such a central site? Malvern's other Non-Conformist Churches are tucked out of sight – but not here. The spire plays an important part in the

central Malvern skyline. James Tait, a well-established Non-Conformist architect from Leicester, was employed to design a building in the gothic style. Inside, the Church forms an open, lofty hall, with very little decoration; light streams through the unadorned Victorian 'sunshine' glass. There is no chancel, and the visual focus is directed towards the pulpit and the preaching of the word of God. As with so many Malvern Churches, the site slopes steeply downhill (with parish rooms below) and the Church is best entered by the main door, which lies up the slope on Queen's Drive.

10. Christ Church, Avenue Road

1876

The tradition is that as the new suburb grew up around the railway station, wealthier Malvernians who worshipped at the Priory felt the need to provide a separate place of worship for servants, artisans and their families. Christ Church, built in memory of Rev. George Fisk, a former Malvern vicar, was the result of this patronage. No expense was spared. The well-established Liverpool architects, T D Barry & Sons, were employed to design a large and lavishly detailed Church with a lofty spire which figures prominently in the Malvern skyline. Note the dedication stone near the base of the spire and the fine East window by Kempe with his trade-mark sheaves.

11. St Joseph's Roman Catholic Church, Newtown Road

1876

The original Church, designed by the Coventry architect T R Donnelly, must have been small and rather dark. The aisles and other extensions by John Holmes in 1999 enlarge the Church in a totally natural way, and create a building with great atmosphere and spirituality. The 20th century stained glass windows, skilfully transferred with their stonework from the old Church to the new aisle windows, make a considerable impact.

12. St Andrew, Poolbrook

1885

Originally conceived, as the story goes, on nearby Malvern golf course by the Rev. Henry Foster and Edward Chance as a chapel of ease of Christ Church, St Andrew's is a simple building by Worcestershire architect G Lewis Sheppard. It became a parish Church in its own right in 1977, and is now a versatile venue for both worship and community use. A large extension is being planned. The view from the Churchyard looking west must be as beautiful as any in England.

13. Baptist Church, Abbey Road

1894

The Baptist community, after searching for several years, eventually chose the site of the Hay Well Baths and garden. The deeds of sale dictated that the building was "not to be used by the Salvation Army or others using bands or conducting noisy services"! The design, by George Ingall of Birmingham, a well-established Non-Conformist architect, was surprisingly ambitious for the small community of 1893. The outside, in sturdy geometric gothic with a small minaret-like tower, contrasts with the light and lofty interior, in which the focus is the baptismal pool.

14. All Saints, Malvern Wells

1903

This is a Church with rich associations with Edward Elgar, who lived a hundred yards further along Wells Road between 1899 and 1904. Although a Catholic himself, he was nevertheless interested in the building of All Saints, as his friend, Arthur Troyte Griffith (the subject of *Enigma Variation No. VII*), was the supervising architect for the scheme. The tradition is that Elgar composed part of his oratorio *The Apostles* in the quiet undercroft of the Church, and that he may have played a part in the fitting of the unusual Nicholson organ. The Church, set upon the hillside on land given, once again, by Lady Foley, is a design of considerable originality. Inside, the brick buttresses emphasise the simple basilica style of the building.

15. Church of the Ascension, Somers Park Avenue**1903**

The Church of the Ascension is the masterpiece of Walter (later Sir Walter) Tapper. In 1902, Mrs Louisa Vavasour Livingstone offered to pay for a mission chapel in the working-class Newtown area of Malvern in memory of her husband. The young Tapper was asked to design a Church in the High Church tradition of the Oxford Movement. It was his first Church, and he chose the purest Early English style of the early thirteenth century. Inside, one is immediately struck by the sense of height and space. The eye is directed to the High Altar backed by its painted triptych. The elaborate screen, which separates the nave from the chancel and sanctuary, was made by Bainbridge Reynolds, one of the greatest of Arts & Crafts metalworkers. It is a building which deserves to be celebrated far beyond Malvern.

16. United Reformed Church, Malvern Link**1903**

Set amidst the hustle and bustle of the Worcester Road in Malvern Link, the United Reformed Church, holds within it a long struggle by local people to achieve a religious community untrammelled by ritual and tradition. The original congregation of the Malvern Link Free Church established itself in the early 19th century as part of the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion in the neo-Romanesque chapel opposite the Spring Lane junction (now a Chinese takeaway). By 1903, numbers had outgrown this chapel and the Connexion built this new Church, designed by HE Lavender of Walsall, with its open, light interior, and fashionable *Art Nouveau* windows. In 1972, the congregation joined the United Reform Movement, which brought together Congregationalists and Presbyterians.

17. Emanuel [Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion] Wells Road**1874**

Designed by the Malvern architect, Henry Hadden, in a 'vigorous Neo-Romanesque style' with Venetian touches. It is now a Health and Beauty Centre.

18. Convent of the Holy Name, Ranelagh Road**1893**

This is a major Church Community by William Bucknall and Ninian Comper.

Post Victorian Malvern Churches**19. Our Lady and St Edmund RC Church, Oxford Road****1905**

Designed by Peter Paul Pugin, son of the great AWN Pugin, closed in 1996. Now part of Malvern College.

20. Church of the Good Shepherd, Upper Colwall**1907**

Closed and converted for housing in 1995.

21. Wyche Free Church, Upper Colwall**1911**

Designed by H Scott, it replaced an earlier Chapel of 1856.

22. Methodist Church, Somers Park Avenue**1936**

Designed by Stanley A Griffiths of Stourbridge. The original school/Chapel of 1907 remains as the Church Hall.

23. Friends' Meeting House, Orchard Road**1938**

Designed by JR Armstrong, one of the Bournille Village architects.

24. The Church of the Blessed Virgin, Sherrards Green**1958**

Built as a dual purpose Mission Church by Christ Church, Avenue Road to serve that area of Malvern.



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