

Welcome to the lovely Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Nempnett Thrubwell.

The village of Nempnett, although of great antiquity, is not mentioned in Domesday, but was at the time an appendage to the ancient manor of Regilbury. The name Nempnett in old records has variously been written Nemet, Nemlet, Emnet and Emet. It is now usually known as Nempnett Thrubwell. The name Thrubwell is stated to have originated from a spring of water known as the “Thrub Well”, rising on the borders of the parish of Butcombe.

One of the most interesting and important barrows in England, probably the burial place of chieftains, still remains in the parish on a hill a mile from the church. The mound, which is now overgrown with bushes, measures nearly 60 metres in length by 20 metres wide and 15 metres tall. When it was opened at the end of the 19th century it was found to contain stonework constructed as a series of cells. These cells were covered with large, flat stones forming a roof, with an entrance on the south side. Human skulls, bones and horses’ teeth were found inside. The mound is known locally as “Fairy Tuft Toot”.



This lovely little church, dedicated to St. Mary the Virgin, is architecturally valuable both historically and in its contribution to the landscape. Before the Norman Conquest there would doubtless have been a wooden church at the same place. Prior to that, the site would have been pagan. Additionally, an

assembly of wooden houses was probably grouped in the vicinity and related to the nearby water course.

The present building dates from Norman times when its plan would have been a simple rectangle with a small apse to contain an altar. Only the Norman south doorway remains, being a plain arch with a Perpendicular period doorway inserted within it.

The nave seems to have been rebuilt slightly earlier than the Perpendicular period (English Gothic covering the years 1350 – 1530, approximately). The wagon roof does not now have its barrel. Nevertheless, the bosses and moulded ribs remain and there are traces of medieval colour on them. The construction rests on stone corbels – male heads along the south wall and female heads along the north.

In 1864 the nave was restored at a cost of £700, and the chancel arch, chancel, sanctuary and vestry were built in 1897 in the Neo-Decorated style. The east window in the chancel is of three coloured lights of early Munich glass. The centre light represents the Crucifixion, that on the left Moses raising the serpent, and on the right Abraham about to slay his son.



The most noticeable object upon entering the building is the fine oak rood loft and screen separating the chancel from the nave. The design is attributed to the Victorian architect Pugin – probably the Younger. The screen is beautifully carved, and above the loft, in the centre, is a crucifix, with the figures of St. Mary and St. John on either side, while the lower part of the screen is ornamented with finely carved figures of the four archangels.

The western tower is mid-Perpendicular in date and is in three stages, with set-back buttresses. The upper stage is of dressed masonry. The parapet

has blank arcading and square angle pinnacles. The head of the vice displays a quatrefoil frieze, is castellated and terminates with an octagonal spirelet. (The current construction of the spirelet appears to be Victorian in origin and whether or not this replicates an earlier structure is an interesting conjecture.)

At the ground stage, the tower arch contains a ringing gallery which is open to the nave. This wooden gallery is clearly a much later structure which might have replaced an earlier gallery. Alternatively, because of the rather awkward positioning of the font at the western end of the nave, there is the probability that the font was originally placed centrally in the ground stage of the tower and there was no ringing gallery as such. There is a peal of six bells, five of which were cast by the Bilbie foundry which was in the adjoining village of Chew Stoke.



The Norman font – in use for some 1,000 years – has been subsequently carved with early 16th century tracery and demi figures. The oak cone cover has crocketed ribs which terminate with an orb and swan.

Outside in the churchyard, by the remains of the old preaching cross, is a stone covering the grave of Robert, the first rector – 1242.

Thank you for buying this leaflet. All contributions will go towards the restoration and preservation of our lovely church.

The Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary Nempnett Thrubwell

