



Lower Sapey Parish Boundary



The Story of Harpley and Lower Sapey



2026 Harpley celebrates the 150th anniversary of the New church with the Old Church, a testament to a millennium of faith, farming, and shared heritage.

Lower Sapey's origins lie beside the Sapey Brook, where the Old Church—mentioned in the Domesday Book and containing traces of 8th-century burials—once served a medieval monastery welcoming travellers between Shrewsbury and Tewkesbury. After the Black Death in 1365, the valley population collapsed, the monastery was dissolved, and the site became remote for centuries, the main road leading to Bromyard having ceased to be used. In 1914 its demolition was ordered but the letter was lost and, miraculously, it was rescued and restored in 1995 by the Churches Conservation Trust.

As people resettled uphill at Harpley, farms such as Church Farm, Hill Farm, Burton Court, Hatt House and Sapey Court shaped the landscape along the Sapey Brook, while Parkhorn Farm, Marjery Thorne, Culver House Farm and Harpley Green anchored the hamlet above.

A new era had begun in 1876 when Edward Bickerton Evans built the new Harpley Church on higher ground. The Norman font was carried from the old church, linking past and present. The East Window installed in 1920 featuring two wise men and a wise woman — was remarkable for its time, symbolising insight and equality.

Generations of farming families—Dallows, Richards, Edwards, Smiths, Skyrmes, Delahays, and others—served as wardens, organists, trustees, and caretakers. Their homes and work formed the backbone of parish life, their stories woven into its fields, churches and traditions. In the 20th century, Harpley House was built by Alice Evans. Women played major leadership roles. The Ladies' Group (founded 1978) and the Centenary Fund have maintained community and financial independence. Harpley Hamlet's housing association and converted barns supported a growing rural population of over seventy households across 1,700 acres.

Today the church holds Eco Church Silver Award status and founded the national Sustainable Church Flower Movement (2019), promoting seasonal, plastic-free floral practices. The churchyard supports wildlife and welcomes walkers, Scouts, concerts, and parish gatherings.

For more information about the history, families, Churchyard, properties and nature see the Lower Sapey website Parish Plan. <https://e-services.worcestershire.gov.uk/myparish/ParishPlans.aspx?ParishID=75&PostCode=WR66HG&Prop=0&partner=mhc??&MarriedTo=0>

Of course this is a history not a parish plan, but out of history may come a plan....

