



## *The Old Churchyard*

The Tower Churchyard is maintained by The Wybunbury Old Churchyard Society, a dedicated group of volunteers who meet every Saturday.

If you have family buried in the Old Churchyard, we would love to hear from you, so that we can add your stories to our Notice Board.



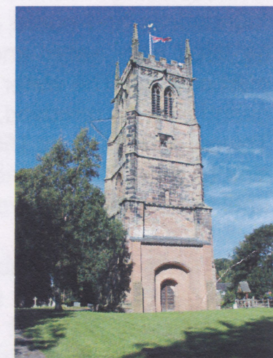
Please contact:-  
[wybunburyplan@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:wybunburyplan@hotmail.co.uk)

# WYBUNBURY TOWER

THE LEANING TOWER  
of  
SOUTH CHESHIRE

*The Tower* is the oldest building in the village of Wybunbury. It was part of a church built in the late 15<sup>th</sup> century, during the last phase of English medieval architecture in Cheshire, when at least 40 steeples were built between 1470 and 1530.

Several churches have been constructed on this elevated site, but only the Tower remains. Its tendency to lean has earned it the title "The Leaning Tower of South Cheshire", or in earlier days, "The Hanging Steeple of Wimberie".



However, it has survived for over 500 years and during this time, because of unstable ground beneath it; five churches have become unsafe and have been rebuilt. The last church was closed after the services for Christmas in 1972 and was demolished five years later. The Tower was declared dangerous and unsafe, due to its increasing lean, and was closed to the public.

The Church authorities proposed to remove the six bells before demolishing the Tower but local people were determined to save it and formed the Wybunbury Tower Preservation Trust to campaign and raise funds to save the Tower. The main task facing the trust was to straighten the Tower, which by 1983 was leaning badly to the north east, nearly 4ft (120cm) from the vertical.

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The 'Big Lift' took place on 16<sup>th</sup> March 1989, an event watched by many people and reported in the local and national press. The foundations of the Tower were reinforced with concrete rafts and 85 hydraulic jacks were put in place and used to lift and straighten the Tower. At the request of the Trust, the Tower was left approx. 18" (45cm) off plumb, so that it remains 'The Leaning Tower of South Cheshire'. But since it now rests on concrete "stools", jacks could be used again in future if adjustment is needed.

In fact this was the 2<sup>nd</sup> time the Tower has been straightened. Despite its square shape, which gives stability, it has always tended to lean and by 1832 it has a lean of 5' 7" (170cm). James Trubshaw of Great Haywood, Staffordshire, a remarkable, self taught civil engineer, undertook to correct the lean. Without using machinery he dug down to the foundations and bored a series of holes which he filled with water and then corked up with marl or clay. The water softened the soil and a quantity was removed. The weight of the Tower, estimated at 1500 tonnes, caused it to sink to that side and the process was repeated until the Tower was level.

The Tower is remarkable because it is about 96ft tall and 32ft square, built in the Perpendicular style at the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, with 5 sections or stages. Most church towers of this period were about 60ft high and had 3 stages. Accordingly on a clear day, the views from the top of the Tower are extensive.

The roof has a battlemented parapet with pinnacles at each corner and carved faces which

were renovated in 1993. In the centre is a weather cock with compass points.



**Information taken from "A Guide to the Medieval Tower of Wynbunbury in South Cheshire" by Barbara Colbert**

## The Bells of Wybunbury Tower

The Bell ringing chamber is the room where a band of six ringers operate the bells, using the special ropes.

After the Tower was closed in 1972 the bells were silent for 16 years, but today



an enthusiastic team rings every Thursday evening and on special occasions. Ringers receive 50p from the Bell ringers' Charity, a tradition which goes back to a bequest made in 1695 by Captain Thomas Jones. As a boy Thomas was lost in summer mist on the 'lawns' (fields) between Hough and Wybunbury. He found his way back to the village by following the sound of the bells. In his Will 10 Shillings (50p) is to be paid annually to the bell ringers on condition that the bells are rung annually on the 10<sup>th</sup> August FOR EVER! The six bells now in the Tower were cast in 1971, probably using metal from earlier bells.

**The Tower Preservation Trust** is a registered charity, raising funds to maintain this historic building. The Tower belongs to the people of Wybunbury and is a Grade A listed Building.



For further information please visit the website [www.wybunbury.org.uk](http://www.wybunbury.org.uk)