

## A LITTLE PIECE OF HISTORY ...

St Mary's Church in Tetbury is reputed to have one of the highest spires in Britain, but do you know exactly how high the spire is?



### How high is the steeple?

It seems a regular question asked by visitors to the town. Eric Hodgson in "A History of Tetbury"<sup>1</sup> gives the answer as 186 feet. How did he know? Quite simple really, like a huge number of historical questions someone had been asked and answered it before him.

I tripped over what is probably the first recorded mention of this height whilst hunting through some death records in the old Parish records. These are now stored in Gloucestershire Records Office in Gloucester on both microfiche and microfilm. I was actually looking for evidence of old Henry West who supposedly lived to 152 and had 5 wives, childless with the first four but successful 10 times with the fifth.

I spotted a note written by Vicar John Wight, one of Tetbury's biggest benefactors who recorded some measurements taken on 25<sup>th</sup> May 1776 by Francis Hiorn who was the architect responsible for re-building St Mary's. It read....

	yds
"Ground to the floor of ye leads [tower]	24-0-0
From the floor of ye leads to ye top of ye stone work	35-2-0
From the top of ye stone work of ye spire to ye top of ye upright	
Bar ye supports ye weather cock	2-0-0
From ditto to ye top of ye head of ye weather cock	<u>0-1-0</u>
	<u>62-0-0</u>
The spire leans to the South or is out of upright	4-6
Ditto toward the East	0-8

These observations were made when the spire was repaired in the year of our Lord -1774 by the order of Mr Thomas Webb Architect."

The arithmetic looks slightly out of true but who am I to argue with an Architect let alone a Man of God? It is a jolly good welcoming sight.

**Geoff Haines, History of Tetbury Society**

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<sup>1</sup> Eric Hodgson; "A History of Tetbury"; (Alan Sutton) 1976, this edition 1978