

St. Mary the Virgin, Twickenham, Middlesex

Introduction to this History, Survey and Layout document

This short document contains some information on the history of St Mary's Church, Twickenham, and on the putting together of the collection of inscriptions which are now accessible online. The document also includes a photograph of the church, and layouts of where each memorial can be found today.

To locate St. Mary's it is recommended to access the church's own website page:

<http://www.stmarytwick.org.uk/>

History

This short history is based on the church's Wikipedia entry, and the History section from the church's website. There has been a church dedicated to St. Mary on this site from at least 1332, the date when it is known that William Broun was first vicar of the church. The church that existed into the start of the 18th century was constructed of Kentish Rag, a poorly consolidated limestone found beneath the chalk of southern England. As a result of this material, and the digging of vaults beneath the church, on 9th April 1713 the entire nave of the church collapsed.

The story is that the cleric Dr. Samuel Pratt had foreseen that such a collapse was imminent. He had been insisting that a tabernacle be erected in the churchyard, and he preached in the church that the congregation should give thanks lest the church fall down while they were in it. The people laughed at him for this, but within a week the church was fallen. Dr. Pratt became the new vicar and the congregation, in thanks for their deliverance, contributed to its rebuilding.

The bell tower is all that now remains of the mediaeval church. Sir Godfrey Kneller, a churchwarden of the church, and court painter, together with the architect John James of Greenwich, was instrumental in the rebuilding of the nave using a classical design of red brick, as favoured in this period.

While many of the church's memorials were lost in the collapse of 1713, some memorials survived and are still to be found in the church. The oldest of the memorials is a brass to Richard Burton, chief cook to the king, and Agnes his wife, which is dated 1443.

There is a stone tablet cemented into the outside of the churchyard wall at the front of the church (reference 107) which records that in the year 1713 His Grace Charles, Duke of Somerset presented 1686 superficial feet of ground to the parish for the enlargement of the churchyard. A further tablet nearby (reference 108) records that in the year 1754 the Earl

and Countess of Northumberland gave a further 389 feet of ground to enlarge the churchyard. The term superficial feet was used as an alternative to square feet at that time.

In 2017 the church is surrounded by a small churchyard, in which most of the headstones are now removed to the surrounding walls. On the south side of the church there is also a Garden of Remembrance with many small memorials to commemorate those who have had their ashes spread in the garden.

While a few memorials up to 1846 can be found in the churchyard, the churchyard was essentially full by 1782, when the church acquired a new site some 400 yards distant, now known as Holly Road Garden of Rest, and all St. Mary burials took place there for a number of years, until it too became full. The second overflow burial ground was again some 400 yards distant at Oak Lane Cemetery, which opened for burials in 1839.

Previous surveys of the memorials

The earliest record of inscriptions from the church was by Daniel Lysons in 1795, in his book titled *'The Environs of London, Vol. 3, County of Middlesex'*. This was followed in 1797 by Edward Ironside's book titled *'The History and Antiquities of Twickenham'*, which included memorials from inside the church and from the churchyard.

Then in 1872 the Reverend Richard S. Cobbett, at one time curate of the church, produced a book titled *'Memorials of Twickenham, Parochial and Topographical'*, which provided a comprehensive record of all the inscriptions from the church, including the wall memorials, and inscriptions from stones lain into the floor of the church.

In about 1988 members of West Middlesex Family History Society (WMFHS) produced a small blue book (A5 size) in which they reproduced the collection of church memorial inscriptions as recorded by Cobbett, and also the churchyard memorial inscriptions as recorded by Edward Ironside. The book then included a further 46 inscriptions taken from memorials in the churchyard.

Finally in 2015 local historian Anthony Beckles Wilson produced a book titled *'The Church of St. Mary the Virgin, Twickenham – The Memorials and Ledgerstones'*. This book provides much more than just the inscriptions from the church. It provides excellent photos of all the wall memorials, and biographical notes of most of the individuals mentioned in them. It also contains translations of all those containing Latin text. This book is on sale (in 2017) at Twickenham Museum, with proceeds going to the church.

The 2017 survey

The scope of the 2017 survey was to include all memorials as found in the church, and all memorials from both the churchyard and the Garden of Remembrance. Within the church the wall memorials were all in good condition and could easily be read. However, the

inscriptions from stones in the floor were understandably worn, and for most of these it was necessary to take the readings straight from Cobbett.

In the churchyard 19 of the memorials could not be read at all. Of the 90 memorials that could be read, or at least identified, 12 inscriptions were found in Ironside, and a further 47 could be compared to inscriptions in the small blue book. The remaining 31 inscriptions are original readings.

This left a total of 71 churchyard inscriptions recorded by Ironside, and 3 from the small blue book that had not been identified. While most of these memorials must have been removed from the churchyard by 2017, it is likely that the 19 memorials already mentioned will account for some of these. It is mainly for this reason that these 74 'not found' memorials are included here with a prefix of NF.

Latin translations, being mostly from the church, have been copied from Anthony Beckles Willson's book, with one further Latin inscription from the churchyard being provided by Diana Wells, archivist for St. Mary's.

Acknowledgements

The Society thanks the Revd. Jeff Hopkin Williams, Vicar of St. Mary's, for providing access to the church, and for supporting this project, and Diana Wells church archivist for her advice and assistance, in particular the Latin translation mentioned above. The Society thanks Roland Bostock and Yvonne Masson for carrying out the survey, and Roland for providing the finished documentation.

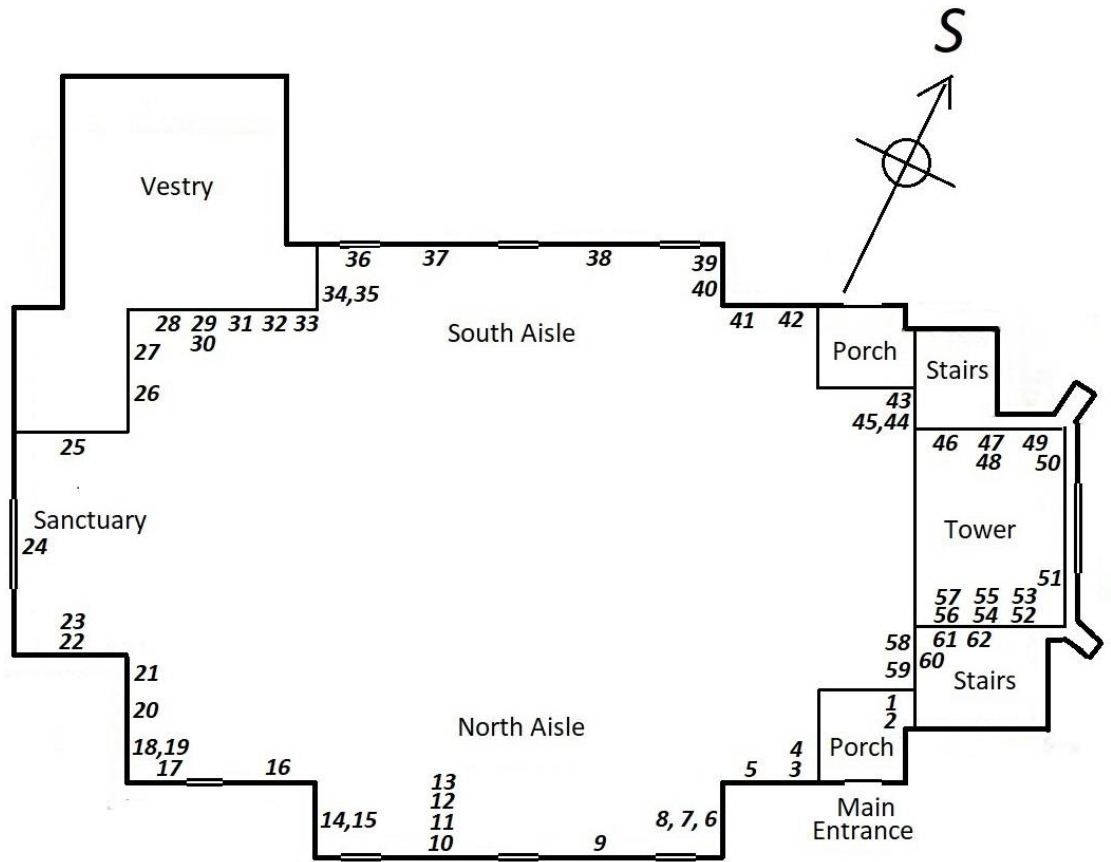
West Middlesex Family History Society
2017



Photograph by Roland Bostock, August 2017

LAYOUTS OF THE MEMORIALS

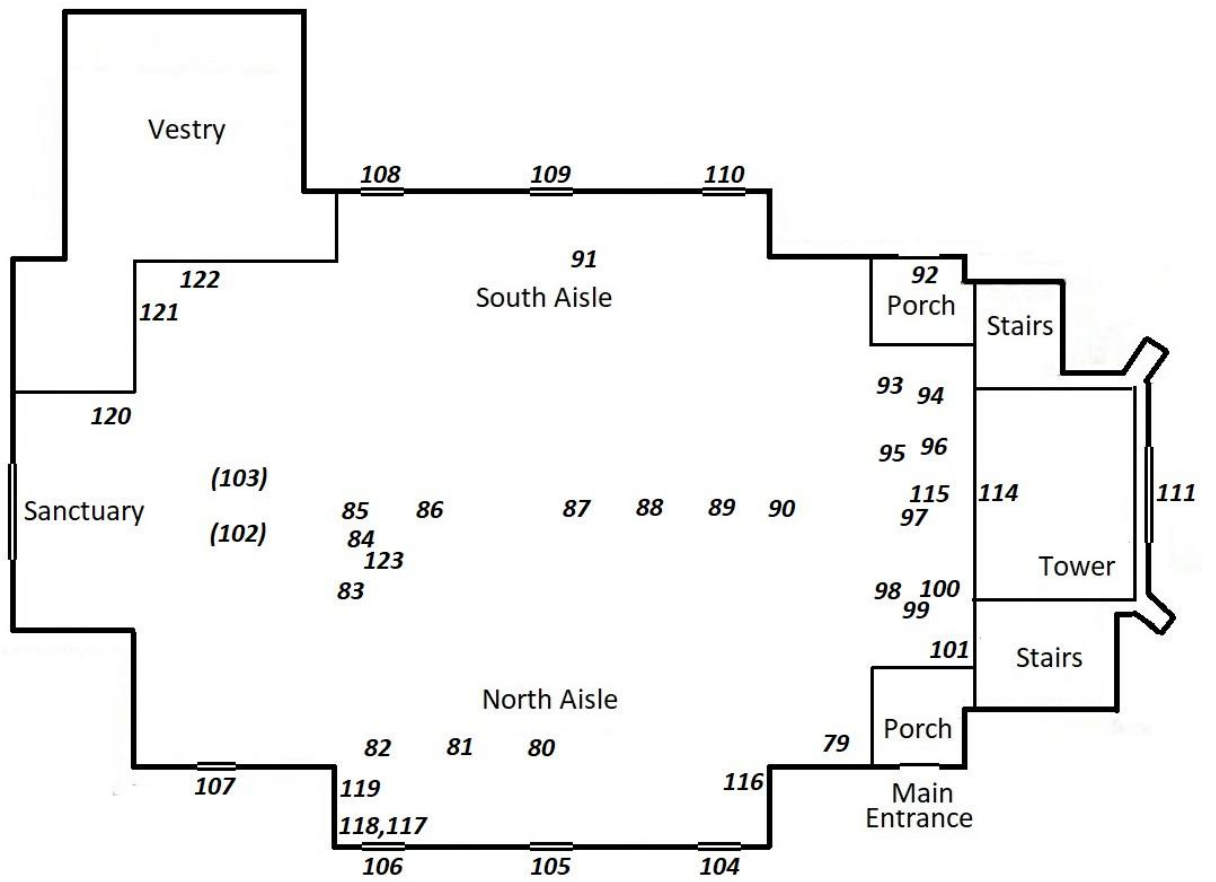
Wall memorials (ground floor)



All memorials (gallery)



Floor, Windows, and Furniture (ground floor)



Churchyard and Garden of Remembrance

