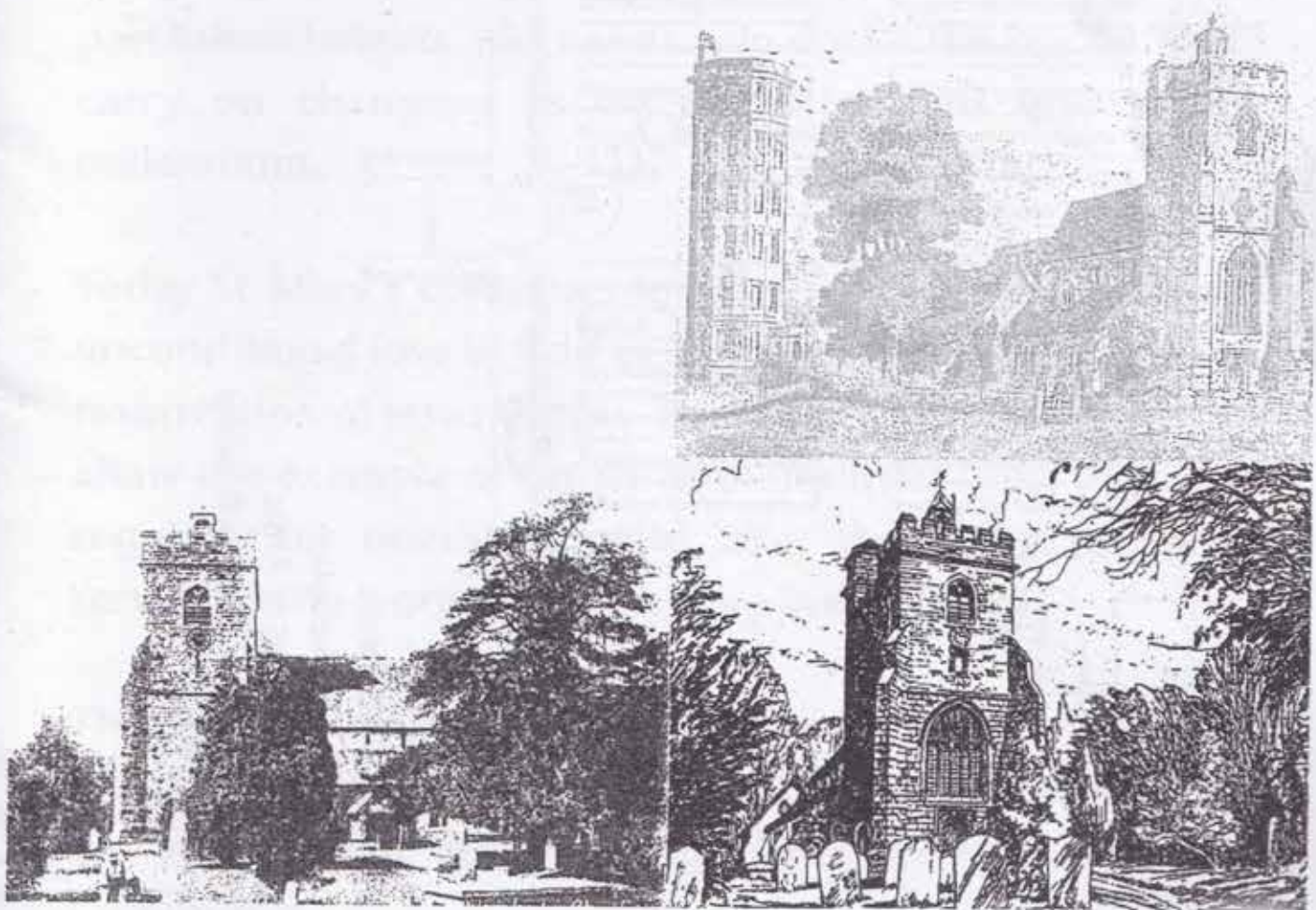
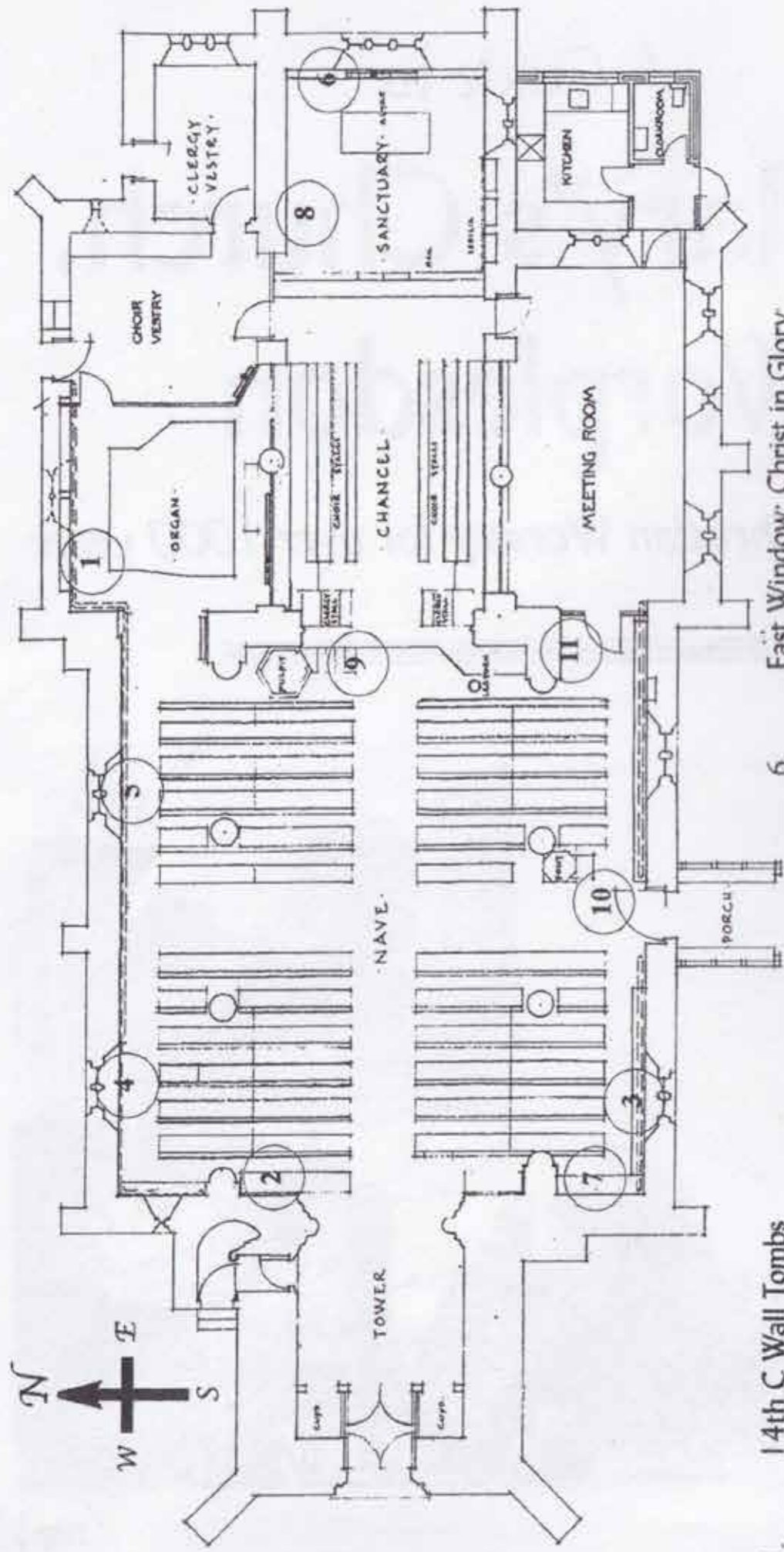


A Guide to

St Mary's Church, Worplesdon

A place of Christian Worship for over 1000 years





1. 14th C Wall Tombs
2. Exfold Tower Inscription
3. Henry VIII Coast of Arms
4. Praying Monk & Bishop Window
5. 14th C glass

6. East Window: Christ in Glory
7. Picture Gallery
8. Eton College Wall Memorials
9. Jacobean Pulpit from Eton College
10. Font from Eton College
11. List of Rectors

Welcome to St Mary's Church in the village of Worplesdon.

This has been a site of Christian worship for over 1000 years. Whatever has brought you to this building, we hope something of its peace and tranquillity will remain with you when you journey on.

St. Mary's is a wonderful historic building but throughout its long history it has always been evolving and changing as each generation has sought to shape the building to its particular insights and needs. No doubt the building will carry on changing as we move forward into a new millennium.

Today St Mary's continues to witness to the inclusive and unconditional love of God as revealed in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The congregation here seek to allow the example of Christ to shape their lives, to gather regularly for worship and to offer themselves to be of service in the world in which they live and move.

This booklet will tell you more about the history of this building, whilst the **Worplesdon Welcome Pack** will tell you more about the on-going life of this local Christian Community.

An Historic Setting

People lived and no doubt worshipped in Worplesdon long before the church was built. Two Bronze Age barrows were found on Whitmoor Common behind the church and excavated by General Pitt Rivers in 1877. There is also evidence of a dyke on nearby Jordan Hill suggesting an encampment – perhaps linked to the well on the North Side of the church. Later the Romans settled in the parish as evidenced by the remains of a Roman Villa excavated in 1829 on Broad Street Common.



The name "Worplesdon" has also evolved through time. Early forms have been Werpesdune (1086), Wropleson (1241), Worplusdon (1316) and Woobsdon (1757). The name is thought to derive from 'worpels' a bridleway and 'dun', a hill.

The churchyard is still criss-crossed by footpaths. Travelling preachers would often stand at such crossroads to preach to passers-by, and perhaps this led to the building of the first church. Most likely the first building would have been of wood but no signs remain of this.

There is a legend that the original plan was to build the church on Broad Street Common but each morning the builders found their stones removed to the top of this hill. Such tales of the mysterious interference of faerie folk are not uncommon in the history of ancient buildings.

The first official record of the church is in the Domesday Book of 1086. The church would then have stood in Windsor Great Forest, which extended as far as Guildford. The original parish included both the present parish of Wyke (separated in 1846) and Burpham (separated in 1920). Today St. Mary's serves the communities of Broadacres, Fairlands, Wood Street Village and Worplesdon.

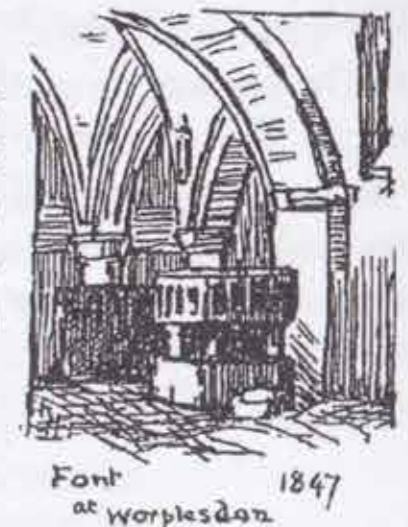
The Present Building

The oldest part of the church is the Chantry or North Chapel, now housing the organ, which is no later than 11th century; although nothing Norman now remains above ground. The Victorians added 10ft to this original chapel in 1866. The two wall tombs here (1) date from the 14th century but are shorn, no doubt, of their glory of finials and crockets. Whether there were recumbent figures beneath the arches is doubtful, but the slab of Purbeck marble now lying outside the west door probably formed the covering of one of the tombs.

The Chancel dates from the 13th century. The very noticeable fact that it is not in the same axis as the nave suggests re-building at an early stage. This mis-alignment tended to happen when a new chancel was built around an earlier one which was then pulled down. The present Chancel is approximately 40ft long, the Nave (without the tower) only 45ft.

The Nave is 14th century in origin and the aisles appear to have been heightened by 18in in the late 16th century. For much of the history of the church the main entrance would have been the South Door. This explains the location of the font, which was traditionally located by the main door to remind people, as they entered, of their baptism. The South Porch has the date 1591 carved on the tie beam over the entrance with the faintly visible royal initials ER.

The South Chapel was added in 1866 and was furnished with pews until 1976 when five pews were removed and this area partitioned off to create a meeting room. A kitchen and toilet were also added at its East end. In 1979 the North Chapel was divided to create a choir vestry.



The Tower

The tower has been described as one of the finest in Surrey. It was built of heathstone around the year 1487. An inscription (2) on the Northwest inner face of the tower reads

'Richarde, Exfold.made.xiv.fote.of,yis.touor.'

The Exfolds were an old Worplesdon family in the XVth to XVIIth centuries, and Richard's will, proved in 1487, left also 'a heifer to the steeple at Worplesdon.'

The West Door under the tower became the main door to the church with the advent of the motor car. The present approach to the church and the car park were laid out under the direction of Sir Laurence Halsey KBE in 1933 and the land, formerly part of Worplesdon Place, was donated to the church. Sir Laurence was also responsible for the building of Worplesdon Memorial Hall in 1921.

The little white cupola on top of the tower, which now houses the bell for the clock, was added in 1766 by the then Rector Dr Burton. Both bell and cupola were originally from the then Rectory (now Maryland) stables. The bell was rung at the end of the sermon to warn the coachmen and



footmen, who stabled their horses at the nearby New Inn, to prepare for their masters' and mistresses' departure. The clock dates from 1874 and was given by Mr Baxendale of Worplesdon Place, who built the big house of Worplesdon St Mary for his son.

The Bells

Worplesdon is one of the few churches in Surrey at the time of the great Church Inventory, taken in the reign of Edward VI (1547-1553), that had a ring of five bells, and it continued to have this number until 1826. The Church accounts show that at some time between these dates the third bell became cracked and had to be re-cast. The work was done at Reading, where from 1560 to 1710 at least six generations of the well known family of bellfounders, the Knights, carried on their business.

It would seem, however, that in the year 1726 all the bells were re-cast, for, of the present ring, Nos.2, 4 and 5 bear the inscription "R. Phelps fecit 1726". Richard Phelps was for many years the proprietor of the famous Whitechapel Foundry, which has been carried on without a break since the year 1570. In 1804 Thomas Mears, also of the Whitechapel Foundry, re-cast the third bell, and in 1826 he re-cast the tenor and put in the new treble bell, which brought the number up to six for the first time. The inscription on the latter tells us that it was "added by subscription". The tenor bell records the fact that at that date Rev. W. Roberts was Rector and William Collins and John King were Churchwardens.

The two new treble Bells were dedicated by the Archdeacon of Dorking on Sunday, December 19th, 1948, in memory of Sir Laurence Halsey KBE and of the sisters, Evelyn, Gertrude, and Winifred Thompson, bringing the ring to eight bells. In 2001 three of the bells were re-hung, quartered turned and placed on metal headstocks.

Bell	Weight*	Note	Date	Casting
Tenor	18 - 2 - 22	E ^b	1826	Thos: Mears Whitechapel
7th	14 - 0 - 26	F	1726	Richard Phelps, Whitechapel
6th	10 - 2 - 14	G	1726	Richard Phelps, Whitechapel,
5th	8 - 2 - 26	A ^b	1969	recast by Whitechapel Bell Foundry
4th	7 - 1 - 13	B ^b	1969	recast by Whitechaepel Bell Foundry
3rd	6 - 2 - 12	C	1826	Thos: Mears
2nd	6 - 2 - 12	D	1948	Gillett & Johnston Ltd
Treble	6 - 2 - 4	E ^b	1948	Gillett & Johnston Ltd

*Bells are weighed in Hundredweights, Quarters & Pounds

The Stained Glass

St Mary's is unusual among Surrey churches in still having some 14th century glass. The main items of interest in the glass are as follows:

Westmost Window, South Aisle (3)

An oval medallion of white glass containing the shield of the arms of Robert Bennet, Bishop of Hereford, 1602-1617 : In the middle of the right light a shield very largely in enamel paint, of the arms of Henry VIII impaling the augmented arms of Anne Boleyn, granted on her marriage. This shield is surrounded by some old blue diaper from a background.



*Kneeling figure of a monk
in the North Aisle*

Amongst the armorial bearings in the windows in the south aisle are the red roses of Jasper, Earl of Pembroke, who at one time held the Lordship of the manor of Worplesdon.

Westmost Window, North Aisle (4)

Near the base of the left light, a small kneeling figure 8 inches high with hands in prayer, upturned face and tonsured head, in blue undergarment, red cloak, and large brown hood, kneeling on a floor of black and white squares, with a yellow border, the head and face are beautifully painted. Next to this is the bearded head of a bishop wearing a mitre. These are most likely late 15th century.

Eastmost Window, North Aisle (5)

This window contains considerable remains of two rich 14th century canopies with a small figure beneath each. Both lights have been largely reconstructed. Both figures are more or less made up of fragments, though of the same period. That on the right has the head of a female saint and carries a book in the left hand, the right raised to her chin : she has a

yellow robe, The following parts of the inscription can be identified:
Sa Celi(lia) (s)a Eth(eldreda).

These figures with those of 'praying monk and bishop' were at one time in the East window of the Chancel.



*Head of a bishop
in the North Aisle*

The East window (6), the work of Messrs. Clayton and Bell, dates from 1887, with the exception of the leaf and grisaille tracery glass, which is practically all 14th century. It portrays Christ in glory as described in the Book of Revelation.

The Victorian Renovation

A former Rector, Revd Chitty (Rector 1931-42), has described 1866 as Worplesdon's 'year of disgrace'. In this year the architect Henry Woodyer (also responsible for designing neighbouring St Luke's Burpham) undertook a major re-ordering. Whilst some will mourn the loss of significant historic artefacts, the changes reflected the Victorians' confidence in shaping the church building to their own needs.

The medieval Chancel Arch was replaced with a higher and wider Gothic arch leading to the loss of frescoes of Moses and Aaron previously over the arch. Also lost was a fresco of St Christopher over the south door along with several 15th and 16th century wall memorials. Out too went the Norman font and the west end Musicians Gallery and the box pews. Fortunately a water colour from 1829 shows the church before these changes. This is displayed on the west wall of the South Aisle (7).

The Organ

The Organ came from Critchell Down Park, in Dorset, when that church was pulled down. It was rebuilt here in Worplesdon in 1961 through the generosity of a few anonymous donors. The two manual pipe organ has an exceptionally pleasant tone. It is a Grey and Davison, rebuilt in 1902 by Gritten and Stroud (Bath). A major overhaul was carried out by George Osmond of Taunton in 1981.

Great Organ - 8 stops. Swell - 7 stops. Pedal Organ - 3 stops. 4 couplers. Two composition pedals to Great. Two composition pedals to Swell. Tracker action to manuals. Pneumatic action to pedals. Electric motor by BTH.

Links With Eton College

The first known Rector is James de Cobham in 1282 and the patronage of the living remained with the de Cobham family until the 17th Century when it passed to the possession of the Crown.

In 1693 the Crown exchanged the patronage for Petworth which at that time belonged to Eton college. Thus the patronage of Worplesdon passed to Eton college and is still with the College today. Since that time several Rectors have also been Provost of Eton, as shown by several of the wall memorials by the Altar (8).



*Eton College
Coat of Arms*

The Jacobean Pulpit (9) and the Font (10) both come from Eton Chapel and were installed as part of the Victorian renovation. The Altar rails removed from Eton Chapel at the same time were not installed in St Mary's until 1932, when the Choir and clergy stalls were re-newed.

The Church Plate

The Church plate includes the following items of Pre-Cromwellian silverware:

- * Silver gilt Flagon of secular origin, dated 1598, and given to Worplesdon in 1800 by Eton, having been given to them by Lady Margaret Saville, together with its pair, which is now at Mapledurham Church in Berkshire.
- * Silver gilt Paten, dated 1572, also brought from Eton in 1800.
- * A smaller silver gilt Paten of unknown origin, but said to have also been brought from Eton in 1800
- * Silver gilt Chalice with lid, dated 1616, and also brought from Eton in 1800.

For safety this is kept by St Mary's patrons, Eton College. A photograph of the plate is displayed on the West wall of the South Aisle (7).

The Registers

The list of Rectors, displayed in the South Aisle (11), dates back to 1282. The parish would also have had links with the Dominican Friary in Guildford founded by Eleanor of Provence in 1274 and finally suppressed by Cardinal Wolsey in 1523. Today the Friary Shopping centre stands on its site. It is recorded that two friars should come to St Mary's twice a week to celebrate Mass "for the prosperity of the King in return for 40 cartloads of wood a year from Hendeley Park and Worplesdon Common."

The earliest registers are dated 1539, and all except the most recent are stored at the Surrey History Centre. Queen Elizabeth II and other members of the Royal Family have signed the registers on a number of occasions when they have been present at services connected with the family of the late Rev. the Hon. Andrew Elphinstone (Rector 1953-62). Pictures of these visits are displayed in the South Aisle (7).

Semaphore Tower

In 1822 The Admiralty built a Semaphore Tower to the NE of the Church in the churchyard, one of a chain of signal stations between London and Portsmouth.

Messages were signalled between London and Portsmouth, including the Time signal from Greenwich at 1 o'clock each day. The last message was passed in 1847, after which it was pulled down.

Visiting Worplesdon in 1846 the Irish poet George Worley described the Tower as follows 'A huge eight sided edifice taller than the church tower, covered with yellow white wash, and every alternate window blind, a pole on the top like a candle stuck on a loaf.'

The site is marked in the churchyard and a watercolour in the South Aisle picture gallery illustrates the church and tower (7).



WORPLESDON CHURCH, AND SEMAPHORE.

The Church Beyond St Mary's

Christianity in Worplesdon was not just focused around St Mary's. One of the first members of the Society of Friends (Quakers) was Stephen Smith of Whites Farm. He was a personal friend of George Fox who founded the Society in 1667 – Fox came to stay with him that same year. Smith gave him an adjoining farm as a burial ground for Quakers. In more recent times this farm became part of the community of Fairlands.

In the 17th Century there were also Huguenots living in Worplesdon escaping Catholic persecution in France. Non-conformist meetings also began in the village at this time but a chapel was not built until 1822 by the Congregational Church, which in 1971 became part of the United Reformed Church. Worplesdon United Reformed Church is situated about 1/2 mile further along the main road through Worplesdon. The bell on the outside was originally the bell from the former Perry Hill School. *

As the parish grew in the 19th Century it was suggested a church be built in Wood Street Village. A fund was opened in 1893 and services were held intermittently in the village school. However regular services were not held until 1923 and it was not until 1925 that a Mission Hall was finally built. In 1937 the Hall was re-dedicated as St Alban's Church. Within a few months the then Curate announced that a new church was needed but many years passed before that vision was fulfilled. In 1967 a new church was finally built, along with a church hall. In 2003 the church was given a major restoration to overcome some of the weaknesses of the 1960's design and to ensure that the building will be there to serve many generations yet to come.



St Alban's Church 1925

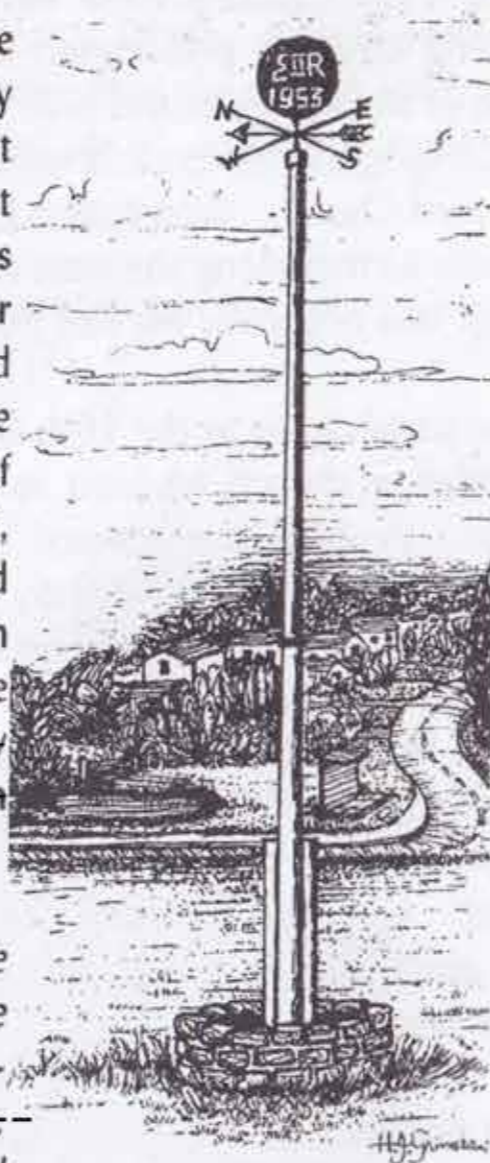


St Alban's Church 1967

Around and About

Beyond St Mary's Churchyard lie the Worplesdon Commons which help the parish to retain its rural environment, despite its proximity to the thriving towns of Guildford and Woking. St Mary's makes a good starting point for exploring the Whitmoor and Rickford Commons whilst St Alban's Church in Wood Street Village makes a good starting point for exploring the Broadstreet and Backside Commons. Refreshment can be supplied along the way from any one of the parish's eight pubs. *

Also worthy of a visit is the Sidney Sime Gallery at Worplesdon Memorial Hall. Sidney Sime, who lived in Worplesdon during the first half of the 20th century, was an artist of great originality and variety, whose best work was comparable with Aubrey Beardsley, Arthur Rackham and Kay Nielsen. His mysterious and fantastic illustrations were published in the well-known weekly and monthly magazines of the turn of the century, such as the 'Strand', 'Pall Mall' and the 'Idler' and were considered sensational in their day. The Gallery is open only by prior appointment; ~~visitors are welcome to make an appointment by contacting the Memorial Hall Caretaker on 01483 232117.~~ *



The Maypole
on Wood Street Village green

Further information on the history of the parish of Worplesdon can be found in the millenium publication, 'Worplesdon 2000 - The Tale of Four Villages' ~~which is available, price £5, also from Worplesdon Memorial Hall.~~ *

Before you leave...

May we invite you to sit awhile and enjoy the stillness of this wonderful ancient building. We invite you too to pray for the life of the Christian family here...

Heavenly Father make this parish of Worplesdon like a city set on a hill whose light cannot be hidden, so that the people of this community may find Christ as the Light of the World and his Church as the family of the Redeemed, and eternal life as the gift of God; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

and to pray also for your own Christian journey...

Thanks be to you, our Lord Jesus Christ, for all the benefits which you have given me, for all the pains and insults which you have carried for me: O most merciful Redeemer, Friend and Brother; may I know you more clearly, love you more dearly, follow you more nearly, day by day. Amen

For further advice and information please contact:
The Church Office
The Rectory, Perry Hill
Worplesdon GU3 3RE
T: 01483 233091
E: churchoffice@worplesdon parish.com

Addendum

* Congregational Church / United Reformed Church

The former United Reformed Church at Rickford, shown in the photo below, sadly held its last service in November 2020. There had been an Independent / Congregational Church on the site for 198 years.

The building has now become the Guildford Central Masjid (Muslim Education and Cultural Association) Photo on right:



* Public Houses

There are now only two public houses in the Parish of Worplesdon (The Jolly Farmer and The Cricketers) and the Worplesdon Place Hotel

* The Sime Gallery

Text or Call: 07951 024220

Email: enquiries@sidneysimegallery.org.uk

* The Worplesdon 2000 Book

Hard copies can be obtained from the Worplesdon Parish Council Office
Unit 2 Saxton, Parklands, Railton Road, Guildford, Surrey, GU2 9JX
Price £10.00 or by following the link below to the Worplesdon Parish Council
History page:

<https://worplesdon-pc.gov.uk/a-tale-of-four-villages/>

